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THE BRIDE'S DOWRY

A NOVEL

BY

MRS. E. D. E. N. SOUTHWORTH

AUTHOR OF

"Self-Raised," "Ishmael," "Retribution," "The Bridal Eve," "The Deserted Wife," "Eudora," "The Haunted Homestead," "The Widow's Son," "Victor's Triumph," "The Wife's Victory," Etc

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THE BRIDE'S DOWRY.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERY.

Is this the hall? The nettle buildeth bowers,
Where loathsome toad and beetle black are seen!
Are these the chambers? Fed by darkest showers,
The shiny worm hath o'er them crawling been!
Is this the home? The owlet's dreary cry,
Unto that asking makes a dread reply!—NICOLL.

Early in the autumn of 18—, we were journeying leisurely through the majestic and beautiful mountain and valley scenery in the interior of Virginia.

It was near the close of a golden October day that we reached the picturesque little village of Hillsborough, situated upon a very high point of land, and in the midst of abrupt, rocky, tree-capped peaks, with green dents of fertile soil between. It was a town of rocks—founded upon rocks—hemmed in by rocks—the dwelling houses, outhouses, fences, pigpens, chicken coops, all built of rocks of every conceivable variegated hue. It was, indeed, a beau-

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tiful and brilliant piece of mosaic work, up and down a ground of shaded green. It was as radiant and many colored as the forest in autumn, and flashed and sparkled in the golden sun like an open casket of jewels.

We reached the quaint old inn in time for a late dinner. There we expected to meet the carriage of a friend who resided at a farm about five miles distant, across the mountains, and at whose house we were going to spend a few weeks. We found our friend, Mrs. Fairfield, waiting for us, and as soon as dinner was over we set out for Cedar Cliffs. Our road lay west through a savagely-beautiful country, breaking itself up toward a lofty range of blue mountains encircling the western horizon, and behind which glowed and burned the crimson sunset sky.

We approached the celebrated pass of the Bear's Walk, from the highest point of which an extensive view of the valley was afforded. As we began to ascend the mountain, I fell into one of those indolent, pleasant, but rather selfish reveries, which the gathering shadows of twilight, the darkening scene, and the heavy, sleepy motion of the carriage seemed to invite. From this reverie I was at length aroused by my indulgent companion, who, laying her hand

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upon my arm, and pointing across me through the window on the right, said:

"I wish you to observe that house."

We had just slowly reached the summit of the mountain, and the carriage had stopped to breathe the horses. I looked out at the window on the right. It was yet early enough in the evening, and there was light enough left to see, pitching precipitately down below us, a flight of cliffs, the bases of which were lost in abysses of twilight gloom and foliage, and the circular range of which swept round in a ring, shutting in a small, but deep and cup-shaped valley. Down in the deeps of this darkening vale loomed luridly a large old farm-house of red sandstone. The prevalent tone of the picture was gloom. Down into a reverie about the deep, dark vale, and darker house, swooped my fancy again. The carriage was in slow motion. I drew in my head.

"Did you notice the house?"

"Yes; and through that deep sea of dark and floating shadows, itself the densest shadow, it looms like some phantom, some ghost of a dead home——"

"Say a murdered home."

"I wish you wouldn't break a well-rounded sentence with any sort of improvement—ghost

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of a dead home about to melt away again in the surrounding gloom."

"Well said—better than even you think. Yet that old, half-ruined farmhouse is the center of one of the largest, most beautiful, fertile, highly-cultivated, and productive estates in all Virginia. If you saw it under the noonday summer sun, you would see a variegated ground-view of vast fields of wheat and rye, yellow and ripening for the harvest; corn, green, waving in the sun; red-blossomed clover, pastures of blue grass rolling down the sides of the hills behind us, and stretching out on all sides of the old house, and disappearing under the bow of the circular-bounding of mountains. You hear now the mellowed tinkle of a waterfall, which, springing from the cliffs we have just left, flows down the sides of the rocks—and, reaching the bottom of the cuplike vale, spreads itself into many little, clear rills, well watering its fertile fields, red pasturage, and heavy woods. This estate, with its fine water, its wealth of iron ore and coal in the encircling mountains, its abundance of game in the forest and fish in the river, and its immense water-power, is one of the most valuable in the Southern States, Yet in the midst of that wealthy and highly-

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cultivated plantation stands the homestead, itself a desolation!"

"Then the shadowy view of it is after all the best. Now that you have directed attention to this dark phantom of a home looming luridly from the deep shadows, I warrant that we shall hear you say that this uncouth jumble of rough-hewn red sandstone and miscellaneous rubbish is no less a place than Lingston Lawn, Pomfert Park, or some other style of sonorous sound."

"No—it is only Hickory Hall."

"Oh, yes! one of the oldest mansion houses in the States—the residence, since 1610, of the oldest branch of the Lingstons, the Doverfields, or some other great family, with nothing left but their great name and great need."

"On the contrary, Hickory Hall is only the home of the Wallravens, and has been so for only a hundred years."

"Exactly—precisely—I said that. Hickory Hall, for upward a hundred years, the seat of the Wallravens, an old family, with nothing left but their old name. And now I understand why the homestead is in ruins, while the farm is in the highest state of cultivation."

"Why, I pray you?"

"I will undertake to say that all these well-

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cultivated fields, rolling in riches from hence to the horizon, belong to an 'industrious, intelligent and enterprising' Yankee purchaser and settler, who came here five or six years ago peddling mouse traps, and has now become possessed of all this land, and whose substantial, square-built, red brick house stares one out of countenance somewhere over yonder by the side of the main road leading to market."

"Wrong again. Hugh Wallraven is one of the wealthiest, if not the very wealthiest man in Virginia. His fortune is estimated, with what truth I do not know, at one million."

"Possible! I did not think there was such a private fortune in the country."

"It is said to be true, however."

"One million! Why in the world, then, does he not put up a decent house? A decent house. Good! Why does he not erect upon this favored spot a palace of white marble, with terraces, conservatories, pleasure gardens, fountains, groves? Fill his palace with the most beautiful and perfect works of mechanism, in the way of furniture, to be procured in Europe and Asia; with the rarest works of art of ancient or modern times; his conservatories with the richest exotics of all climes; his gardens with the finest vegetables;

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his orchards with the utmost perfection of fruit? If I were he, with one million of dollars, I would introduce every new improvement in farming, grazing, stock breeding; I would import the best specimens of cattle, horses, poultry. I would have Welch ponies, Scotch draft horses, English hunters, and Arabian coursers. Oh! I would make myself and so many other people happy! One million! Oh! stop—don't speak to me yet—just let me revel in the idea of one million to lavish on this magnificent spot."

"Why, you unsophisticated little blockhead!"

"But why, then, does not this Mr. Wallraven—or rather, Judge Wallraven, or General Wallraven; for I never heard of a planter of any importance, reaching a certain period of life, without some title of distinction—why does not Governor Wallraven do something with one million?"

"He has done something; his farm is the best cultivated in the State."

"Yes! But it should be the best stocked—the best in every particular—the model farm."

"Mr. Wallraven is a very aged man."

"Ah! he is Mr., then."

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"Of course. People do not confer honors of any sort upon men like him!"

"Men like him! He is a bad man, then? Perhaps a criminal, whose immense wealth and powerful family connections have enabled him to cheat the State prison of its due!"

"Mr. Wallraven has never been charged with, or even suspected of, a crime——"

"In his own proper person. 'The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children.' His father, perhaps——"

"Possessed a name that was a synonym for high honor and sterling integrity; his son, with his name, has inherited his reputation and character of strict truth and honesty."

"Ah! that is it, then. He does not cheat at cards, and therefore he has not won any of the prizes in the game of life. But to return to my first question. Why does not Mr. Wallraven, of the sterling integrity, and the pounds sterling, do something?"

"He is the best agriculturalist in the State—it is his ruling passion; his occupation."

"And he lives in a wretched, old, ruinous house? Why doesn't he improve his place?"

"Pertinacious! He is an aged man of sixty years."

"Yes, I see! And he has no children; that

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circumstance paralyzes his energies even more than old age!"

"How you jump to conclusions! He has a son and daughter."

"Hum—hum—ah! well, sixty years old! His son and daughter must themselves be married, and settled off, and have children—and so, at last, he is a solitary old man, with no motive for improving and embellishing his homestead. The old house, it will keep out the rain, is quite good enough, he thinks, for the short life of the solitary old grandfather."

"Utterly wrong! His children, though past their early youth, are both single."

I paused for a moment, and then a luminous idea lighted up the whole subject, and I exclaimed, triumphantly.

"Now I have it! Now I certainly have it! He is one of those unnatural monsters, a miser! Of course! Why, surely! Why did I not see it at once? How it explains everything that was difficult to understand now! How clear that answer to the enigma makes all obscurity! How consistent all seeming contradictions! He is a miser! That does not prevent him being a man of strict honesty, sterling integrity—yet, most certainly, he is a miser; and 'people do not confer titles of dis-

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tinction upon men like him!' Yes, he is a miser! That is the manner in which he has amassed his immense property! That is also the reason why his house is suffered to fall to ruins while his farm is well cultivated; the farm will make returns, but the house will not. He has also half-starved, half-clothed, and half-educated his children. They have grown up coarse, uncouth, ignorant, unfit for good society. They are consequently not well received, and, even if they were disposed to marry, he would not portion his daughter, or establish his son in business. That is the answer to the whole enigma! Now say that I have no quickness of apprehension!"

"Wonderful!"

"Ah! I have my inspirations sometimes."

"Stupendous!"

"You are making fun of me!"

"Hem! Listen. His son, Constant Wallraven, graduated in a Northern university, and made the grand tour of the Eastern Continent, accompanied by a clergyman salaried to attend him. You never saw a handsomer or more magnificent-looking man, or one of more perfect dress and address—the courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword. His daughter, Constantia Wallraven, is one of the most

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beautiful and elegant of women, with one of the best cultivated minds I ever met."

"You surprise and perplex me more and more—handsome, accomplished, wealthy, in the prime of life, and have never been married? But perhaps it is that they are cold?"

"Not so. They have ardent temperaments and warm affections."

"Then they are, take them all in all, not easily matched, and, of course, they are fastidious."

"I think not; I am sure not. For, listen again; some years ago Constant fell in love with the beautiful daughter of a poor day laborer—a poor, miserable fellow, who hired in harvest, or in very busy times, to work in the field with the negroes."

"Ah! now it comes!"

"Constant wished to marry her."

"Well?"

"He offered himself to the girl."

"Well?"

"And the poor, abjectly poor, father threatened to shoot the son of the millionaire if he caught him near his hut again."

"The poor father could not believe in his daughter's good fortune. He suspected the young man of evil designs?"

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"Possibly. If he did him that wrong, he was quickly undeceived, for the very next day Hugh Wallraven, the father, called at the hut of the poor day laborer, and asked the hand of his young daughter, Ellen Dale, for his son and heir; and the poor man, with a blush of indignation, refused it!"

"You astonish me!"

"Hugh Wallraven then offered to settle fifty thousand dollars on the maiden, if her father would permit the match; and the pauper father refused!"

"You astound me! You positively do! What could have been the poor man's motive —enmity?"

"No! The poor creature wept bitterly while refusing his daughter to the son of his best friend and patron—and such was Hugh Wallraven to Thomas Dale."

"Perhaps this Constant Wallraven was a love-child, and the poor but honest and sternly-correct father of a family upon that account despised and rejected the alliance!"

"Did I not say Hugh Wallraven had never been charged or even suspected of crime or vice? No! Constant was the son of his marriage; and here it is well to inform you that the father for his whole life. and the children from

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an early age, have been members in good standing—for persons in their condition—of the Protesant Episcopal Church. If ever a family lived up to a Christian standard, it is the Wallravens."

"And yet, notwithstanding their wealth, intelligence and piety, the poorest day laborer, who is bound to them besides by a debt of gratitude and love, will not ally with one of his family!"

"Even so."

"What can be the reason of this proscription? Some horrible heriditary affliction? Yes, that must be it—insanity, perhaps."

"Worse far than that."

"Blindness?"

"Infinitely worse than that."

"Some loathsome disease, such as we read of in the East—leprosy?"

"Worse even than that, or any disease, or any sin, in this one incurable, fatal family calamity."

"Come, there is a story connected with this doomed family—this dark phantom of a dead home——"

"Of a murdered home, as I said before. Yes, there is a dark, dreadful story—a domestic tragedy!"

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"Will you tell it to me?"

"Yes; or, rather, you shall know it. It is inevitable that you should hear it—perhaps an unjust version of it; and as one very, very near and dear to me is intimately connected with the whole affair, in justice to him you shall have the truth. We are near Cedar Cliffs now. In a few minutes we shall reach the house."

It was dusk.

There is something mysteriously pleasing to me in approaching in the dusk of the evening a strange country house, in which I expect to stay awhile.

As the carriage stopped before the house about to become our temporary home, we looked out with vague interest and curiosity in the blackness of the night; but we could discover nothing but indistinct and shadowy shapes, suggestive of a massive dwelling house, with outbuildings, and trees, and hills, and a background of lofty mountains, looming dark, darker, and darkest, into the murky sky. There was such an absorbing obscurity swallowing up everything. There was such a shadowy interest, such a stimulus to curiosity, such a field for imagination in all so vague and undefined. It is the charm of the un-

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known—the glamour of the *terra incognita*—that attracts us.

It seems like dreamland—like childhood come back. And then there is the cheerful anticipation of exploring the new scenes by daylight to-morrow, after breakfast, of which we think now, and of which we shall dream to-night. We are just agreeably chilly, hungry, and tired enough to anticipate thorough enjoyment from the glowing fire, the hot supper, and the soft bed that shortly awaits us; and curious enough to wonder in detail what each will be like.

At the end of a long journey commend me to an arrival at a country house at dark, where every sort of comfort will be enhanced by the most affectionate welcome. Gently-pleasing fancies and feelings, like these, half-forgotten childish emotions of wonder and curiosity about small things possessed my mind, chasing from it completely all dark and weird imaginings awakened by the Phantom House in the Vale of Solitude

Almost immediately after the carriage stopped, we saw a light glancing behind the closed Venetian blinds of the house, and immediately the front door opened, and a lantern emerged and came to meet us, followed by a

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long, dark shadow that flitted fantastically hither and thither behind it. It was Gullivar, the old gardener, who opened the gate and assisted us to alight. Mary (Mrs. Fairfield) gave us in charge of a colored chambermaid, who conducted us to a pleasant bedroom, fragrant with the smell of dried herbs, and agreeably warmed by a bright and cheerful fire.

Soon as we had bathed and changed our clothes, Mary came and conducted us down to supper in one of those comfortable and agreeable rooms that young and tasteful housekeepers are so fond of perfecting. A coal fire glowed redly through the polished steel bars of a large grate, the bright light of a solar lamp, standing upon the tea table, flashed down upon an elegant tea service of chased silver and white china arrayed upon a snowy damask cloth. It was an enviable room, indeed.

By the side of the fire, in a spring-bottomed armchair, sat a gentleman whose appearance instantly interested me. He was of medium height, of slight, but elegant figure, and his fair, wan complexion, spiritual countenance, and golden locks,

"Did a ghastly contrast bear"

to the black hue of his mourning dress. This gentleman arose with a languid grace, and

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came to receive us; and when Mary named me to "Mr. Fairfield," her husband, he welcomed me with easy kindness.

We then took our places at the table. It was impossible, however, not to observe the expression of profound, incurable sorrow upon the countenance of this young man. It was impossible not to wonder how Mary herself could preserve any remnant of cheerfulness by the side of this heart-crushing despair. It seemed too deep, too great to leave him a thought of struggling against it or concealing it. Yet, habitual politeness, feelings of hospitality or benevolence, made him very kindly attentive to me; and I never saw anything so sad, so moving to tears, as his smile. Indeed, I was already beginning to be painfully, strongly, interested in this young gentleman—more strongly than I like to be in man, woman, or child over whose destiny I can exert no control for their happiness. And when I turned from his wan, spiritual countenance to that of Mary, at the head of the table, I thought that her happy, youthful face, so full of health, intelligence, and cheerful *bonhommie,* must exercise a wholesome, if an unseen, influence upon her suffering companion.

An accident that occurred that evening fur-

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ther excited my wonder and interest. We had left the supper table, which was cleared away, and had gathered around the fire, which had been replenished, and glowed brightly, when a knock at the front door was heard, and soon after the parlor door was opened and an old man stood within it.

He was very tall, very broad-shouldered, but stooping, either with sorrow or infirmity. He was clothed in deep mourning; his left hand leaned heavily on a stout, gold-headed cane, while with his right hand he tremblingly lifted from his venerable head his hat, which he held in his hand, revealing by the action a brow, plowed deep by sorrow or remorse, and hair white as the driven snow. There was an air of deep humiliation, of piteous deprecation, in his whole manner and appearance, most painful to witness in one so aged, and, in every other respect so venerable. Neither Mary nor Mr. Fairfield arose to receive this visitor, nor by look or gesture showed any sort of respect for him—only Mary looked sadly down at her hands, and Mr. Fairfield said kindly, but gravely:

"How do you do, Mr. Wallraven?"

"Mr. Wallraven!" thought I, giving a covert but piercing glance to the aged and stooping

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figure, hat in hand, so deprecatingly at the door.

"Ferdinand, she is dying at last—come to her, she is dying!" he said.

"Dying!" echoed Mary.

"Thank God!" fervently exclaimed Mr. Fairfield, with the first look of hope I had yet seen on his wan face.

"Yes, dying. Will you come?" repeated the old man, as he trembled over his staff. "Will you come?"

Assuredly. Mary, love, order the carriage. Dying at last. Thank God!"

Mary had hastily left the room, and soon returned with his cloak and hat.

Fairfield quickly donned them, and, accompanied by the old man, left the house.

After they had gone, Mary Fairfield walked about in a state of half-suppressed excitement such as I had never seen her betray. She seemed to have forgotten me altogether, for which I could not blame her. Presently, suddenly stopping, she asked, "Dear, are you tired?"

Feeling myself really fatigued and somewhat *de trop*, I answered "Yes."

"I will attend you to your room," she said, and taking up a candle that she herself had left

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burning on the side-table when she came in with Mr. Fairfield's cloak, she preceded me upstairs, and into my room, where we found the fire still burning, and a negro girl waiting.

"You may go, Blanch," said Mrs. Fairfield to the woman, who immediately left the room, and then, "I can unhook your dress, dear," she kindly said to me.

I wished to try her, to see whether she was really concerned at a circumstance, for which she had just thanked God so fervently. I turned suddenly, and squeezing her hand heartily, said:

"Mary, I have half fallen in love with your husband—do you care?"

"Oh, darling, don't jest. He is ill—his constitution has received a severe shock; he is heart-broken."

And now I saw by her countenance that a great deal of her cheerfulness and *bonhommie* in his presence was nothing more than self-control.

A violent knocking at the front door summoned her in haste from the room. It was about fifteen minutes before she returned. She was bonneted and cloaked for a journey, and she held in her hand a large old letter.

"They have sent the carriage back for me,

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dear," she said. "I shall probably be absent all night, but you are at home, you know. Blanch will attend to all your orders; and, dear, here is a letter. It is one that Ferdinand wrote to me on the eve of our engagement; he called it his confessions. It is only his explanation of certain dreadful circumstances that troubled me before our marriage, and that trouble you know. I have Ferdinand's consent to leave it with you. Read it. It will tell you all you wish to know. It will engage you during my absence, and when I return, you will know—the end!"

She kissed me and was gone.

I had been very tired and sleepy; but there was no sleep for me then until I had read the manuscript. I trimmed my fire, drew a candle-stand to my side, and, with my feet upon the fender, opened the manuscript that was to let me into the secret of the "Phantom House."

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CHAPTER II.

WOLFGANG WALLRAVEN.

His face is dark, but very quiet;
It seems like looking down the dusky mouth
Of a great cannon.—JOHN STERLING.

Heed him not, though he seem
Dark and still and cold as clay
He is shadowed by his dream
But 'twill pass away.—BARRY CORNWALL.

I do not know what was the power that attracted me so strongly, so inevitably, so fatally, to Wolfgang Wallraven; whether it was magnetism, sorcery, or destiny, or whether it was the gloom and mystery of his manner and appearance. Certain it is that there was a glamour in his dark and locked-up countenance and in the smoldering fierceness of his hollow eyes that irresistibly drew me on to my fate. He did not seek my acquaintance—he sought the society of no one. On the contrary, he withdrew himself into solitude—into surliness. This was unusual in a schoolboy, and it made him very unpopular. To me, however, his sullen reserve and surly manner had more interest, more fascination, than the openest and blandest demonstrations of social affection from any of the other boys could have. There

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was evidently something behind and under it He was not all outside. Perhaps he piqued my curiosity, or interested some feeling more profound than mere curiosity. I inquired about him.

"Who is he? Where did he come from?"

"We call him the Prince of Darkness! Oh! he is a haughty fellow. The eldest son and heir of an immensely wealthy Virginian. You can't make anything of him; let him alone," was the answer.

I turned my eyes on him. He was sitting at his distant desk—a single, solitary desk in the farthest corner of the schoolroom—his elbow leaned upon his desk, his brow supported upon his left palm, his eyes bent upon the book lying open before him, his dark, rich locks hanging over his fingers.

"Why does the professor give him that distant, single desk, apart from all the other boys? Seems to me that would make him unsocial."

"Why? It is his choice. The young prince is an aristocrat, and does not choose to sit upon a form and mix with other boys. I say, you had better let him alone. You can do nothing with him."

I looked at him again and more attentively. There was more suffering than scorn revealed

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in the charming curves of his mouth—a mouth that would have been perfectly beautiful, had not the lips been too closely compressed and the corners too sadly declined. I gazed at him under the influence of a sort of fascination. Yes, there was more sorrow than hauteur darkly written upon that young regal brow. My heart warmed, glowed toward him with a mysterious and irresistible sympathy that compelled me to saunter toward him. (This was in the recess between the morning and afternoon sessions, a period which, with the exception of a few minutes at the dinner table, he always spent at his solitary studying desk.) I sauntered toward him slowly, for I felt in some degree like an intruder, engaged in opposite and contradictory thoughts and feelings. My intellect was seeking to explain the mystery of his solitude and reserve, and to excuse my own intrusion, by this reasoning.

"He is the eldest son and heir of an immensely wealthy Virginia planter. He is of an old, haughty family, and has been accustomed to 'sovereign sway and masterdom' all his life. He is now, however, in a genuine republican school—thank Heaven, all our schools, academies and colleges are republican—and he finds himself in a mixed company of sons

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whose fathers peddled needles and thread about the town, and whose mothers sold apples under the trees, and made fortunes at it; and, with his senseless and anti-republican, Virginian hauteur, he thinks himself above these, and withdraws himself from them. Ah! I know these proud, aristocratic Virginians well. My haughty uncle was a Virginian, and emigrated to Louisiana. Upon the part of his schoolmates, some are proud as himself, and will not make unwelcome advances; while some are only vain and conceited, ashamed of the newness of their wealth, sore upon that point, secretly honoring old respectability, and, fearful of being suspected of courting it, will not seek the acquaintance of this young aristocrat, lest they be misunderstood. With me, however, it is different. Myself descended from Lord B——, Governor of Colonial Virginia, the possessor of a handsome patrimonial estate in Alabama when I shall become of age, and the heir-apparent of an immense sugar plantation and several hundred resident negroes, I need not fear to approach this young gentleman upon at least an equal footing."

So I reasoned, as I said, to account for his reserve, and to excuse my own intrusion. But

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my feelnigs utterly revolted against my thoughts. My head might think what it pleased, but my heart felt certain that pride of place had nothing to do with the surliness of the strange, lonely boy. As I drew near him I felt a rising embarrassment—a difficulty in addressing him to whom I had never yet spoken one word. Suddenly a bright idea was inspired. I had by chance my "Thucydides" in my hand. I approached his lonely desk, opened my book, and said:

"Mr. Wallraven, I have a favor to ask of you. I am in a difficulty about a Greek particle. If you assist me I shall feel under a very great obligation."

Never shall I forget the effect of his picturesque attitude and expression of countenance as I stood by him. His form was turned from me, and toward the corner window against which his desk sat. He was leaning, as I said before, with his elbow on the desk, his head on his hand, the fingers of which were lost amid dark, glossy locks which drooped over his temples and side face, concealing his face at first from me; but, as I spoke, he quickly, as a startled raven, turned his head, and gave me a quick, piercing glance from his light-gray, intensely bright eye—a glance dilating

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as it gazed, until it blazed like broad sheet-lightning upon me. I had always thought his eyes dark until now. His skin was sallow, his hair, his eyebrows, his sweeping eyelashes, such a jetty, resplendent black that dark eyes were taken for granted. When now, however, he raised the deep veils of those long, black, sweeping lashes, light-gray Saxon eyes, of that insufferable white fire, that vivid lightning, at once so fierce and so intense that none but Saxon eyes possess, flashed broadly forth upon me. He did not reply to me at first. I repeated my request. He silently took the book, examined the indicated passage, presently solved the difficulty, and returned the volume to my hand. As I received it and thanked him I said:

"Mr. Wallraven, we stand in the same class every day. I trust we shall become better acquainted."

He looked at me inquiringly.

"You know my name. I am the son of the late Governor Fairfield, of Alabama, formerly of Fairfax County, Virginia. You, being of that State, probably know something of that family, or of the B——s, who are connections."

"Yes, I have heard of the Fairfields of Fairfax, and I know the B——s by reputation."

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"Very well! Now you know who I am, I shall be glad to cultivate your acquaintance, hoping that we may be friends," said I, thinking surely that I had made a favorable impression upon the queer, difficult boy.

I was undeceived, however, when, with a dry "Thank you," he dropped the light of his beaming eyes again upon his book. I almost fancied I saw two bright spots on the page, like reflections cast from a sun-glass. There was nothing further for me to do than to turn and leave him. The school bell also summoned us at that moment to our afternoon studies.

My attraction to, my affection for, that strange boy was rising almost to the height of a passion. Never did a lover desire the affections of his sweetheart more than I did the friendship and confidence of my queer, outlandish classmate. Never did a lover scheme interviews with his mistress more adroitly than I planned opportunities of conversing with Wolfgang, without seeming to obtrude myself upon him.

I felt as if, notwithstanding his extreme youth, his rank, and his pride, he was by some circumstance an object of compassion—but respectful compassion—as if, notwithstanding his handsome person and fine intellect, he was

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in reality suffering in heart and brain; and I felt as if, notwithstanding his proud reserve with me, I was his necessary medicine. I felt upon the whole not disappointed with his reception of me. At least, the ice of non-intercourse was broken, and I might at any time go to him with a Greek exercise and ask his assistance, which was certain to be lent, and at each interview some little progress was sure to be made. It was true that I really never did need his assistance—my classic attainments being as good as his own—as he might have known, had he taken the trouble to think about me at all; but that appeal to his benevolence was the only manner in which it was possible successfully to approach a haughty, reserved, but noble and generous nature, such as I felt his to be—one, too, so determinedly bent upon solitude. What slow progress I made! Good heavens! At the end of six months our acquaintance had scarcely progressed beyond occasional conversations, commencing with a Greek root. This was, however, much more ground than any other boy held in his good graces.

At the end of the winter session a very handsome traveling carriage, with the Wallraven arms painted on its panels, drawn by a pair of splendid black horses, a well-dressed colored

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coachman, and a smart outrider, arrived to convey Wolfgang Wallraven away. I thought—nay, I am sure—that he betrayed some emotion at parting with me. He went, and I also made hasty preparations to return by stage and steamboat to my distant home in Alabama, where I longed to meet again my lovely and beloved young sister, Regina.

The end of the Easter holidays brought us back to school. There, shortly after my arrival, came Wolfgang Wallraven. He was more gloomy, surly, and solitary than ever to all the other boys; of me, however, he was more tolerant. Indeed, in the course of a month or so, our acquaintance began to take the form of intimacy; and as his character began to develop itself to my view, never, I think, did I meet, in life or in books, so strange a being. If I had before been inclined to favor the philosophy of the dual mind, I should then have been in danger of being a convert to that theory. Two natures met, but did not mix or blend in him; two natures as opposite and antagonistical as were his fierce, light-gray Saxon eyes and the sweeping, jet-black lashes, brows and hair. If any one trait of character stood distinctly out one day, it was certain that its

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very opposite, in all its strength, and even excess of strength, would reveal itself the next.

As his heart gradually, very gradually, unfolded itself to me—or rather to my sympathy—he would occasion me a succession of surprises, and even shocks—pleasing, painful, ecstatic, agonizing, according to the nature and power of new, opposite, and unexpected traits.

He possessed the highest order of talent, but exhibited a very erratic application. If, for one week, he applied himself concentratively to his studies, the next week he would be sure to throw away his books, and pass into the most *distrait ennuyée* and despairing mood conceivable, from which no remonstrance, no reproof, of the master professor would arouse him.

As time went on, I still made slow but certain progress in his affections; but little and very precarious ground I held in his confidence; though still in his manner to me, as in everything else, he was inconsistent, contradictory, incomprehensible and often astounding. If, upon one occasion, he would treat me with unusual warmth and kindness, upon the next he would be sure to freeze up in the most frigid reserve.

He was, indeed, a combination of the most discordant elements. As I became intimate

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with him, I witnessed the most stupendous metamorphoses of character. A sovereign, overmastering haughtiness would alternate with a slavish, almost spaniel-like humility; a fierce and wolfish moroseness of temper give place to an almost womanish tenderness. I confidently, logically expected the time when this frozen ice of his reserve would thaw, and drown me with his confidence; on one particular occasion I felt sure it was coming.

I went to his room after school, by appointment. I saw the boy who distributed, or rather carried around the letters through the house, coming down the stairs as I was going up, and, pausing only long enough to take the letter for myself from him, I hurried on, intending then to excuse myself to Wolfgang, and retire to my room to read my letter, which I saw was from my sister. But as I approached his room, the sound of suffocating sobs reached me, and, throwing open the door, I went in and found Wolfgang sitting at his writing-table, his arms extended upon it, his head down upon them, abandoned to the utmost agony of sorrow.

I never shed a tear in my life. I saw my beloved mother, my adored father, die, and I suffered the extremity of bereavement and grief, but never wept, or felt disposed to weep; there-

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fore, it was dreadful to see a tear in the boy's eye, and here was Wolfgang lost, convulsed with anguish; and sobs and sighs, such sobs and sighs as rive the heart in their passage, bursting from his bosom; and copious tears, such tears as scald like molten lead wherever they drop, falling from his burning eyes. I saw yet scarcely saw, an open letter on the floor. My heart sank within me to see him so violently shaken with agony. I went to him, scarcely knowing whether, in his uncertain mood, he would throw himself into my arms, or knock me down. I went to him, and, stooping and speaking low, said:

"Wolfgang, my dearest Wolfgang, what is this? Can I in any way comfort or assist you?"

I confess that I was surprised when he turned and fell weeping upon my bosom, in the very collapse of mortal weakness, murmuring:

"Yes—yes; comfort me, if you can. I am weak—weak as a child—weak as an infant. Oh! hold me—comfort me—love me! Love me if you can."

I set myself to soothe him. I spent some time seeking to console and sustain him, merely by reiterated assurances of sympathy and constant, unfailing friendship. At last I asked:

"Is there anything I can do for you?"

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"No, nothing! nothing! Only give me your sympathy, or I die! I die without that support."

"You have my sympathy, dearest Wolfgang, my adopted brother; but will you not relieve your bosom of its burden of grief; will you not lay it on my breast, that I may help you to bear it?"

"Not now! Not now! I cannot."

I could only try to strengthen and soothe him by assurrances of affection and esteem, until again observing the letter, I said:

"I see you have a letter, Wolfgang. Is it from home? Are your family all well?"

His eyes flew wildly around and fell upon the letter. He sprang from me, stung to a sudden strength, and, seizing it, tore it to atoms and flung it from the window, exclaiming, furiously, while his gray eyes blazed with intolerable light:

"By Heaven, if it were me! if it were me! that which I deserved and had a right to, I would seize and make my own, though Satan himself and all his legions stood between!"

"Is this, then, a matter of property, Wolfgang?"

"Property! Property!" he echoed, with bitter scorn. "Do you suppose that all the money, all the 'property' in the world is worth

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one such tear of blood as the millions my heart has dropped to-night? No," he added, with contemptuous coolness, "it is not 'property.'"

"Wolfgang," I said, softly, "I have been unjust to fancy for an instant that such a cause could produce such a terrible effect; but what is it, then, my brother?"

"Ah! a matter of heart and soul, of life and immortality, of heaven and hell—leave me! I am distracted, delirious—leave me! You see that I am mad!"

"Can I not serve you in any manner, Wolfgang?"

"No, in no way but in leaving me alone. Some day, perhaps, I will tell you something—not now."

I reluctantly left the room, my thoughts still continuing absorbed in Wolfgang and dwelling upon his woe.

To have seen him the next morning, no one could believe it possible that he would ever, under any circumstances, have yielded to such tempest of grief, or abandoned himself to such a more than womanish weakness. Dark, erect, haughty, reserved, he seemed, even to me, quite inaccessible. My affection for him was so

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great, my wish to do him good so importunate, that in a few days I re-essayed to do so.

We had been sauntering through the lawn together. We sat down on a bench under the shade of an oak tree. He fell into silence—into gloom. I thought that now was a favorable opportunity. His hands were folded and his eyes bent in abstraction upon a ring, which he then evidently saw not, on his little finger.

"Of what are you thinking, Wolfgang?" I asked. He started, turned, flashed on me a broad blaze of sheet-lightning from his gray eyes, and replied, with a sneer:

"I was thinking whether the coral, or the turquoise made the prettiest seal ring!"

Repelled by his freezing reserve and almost insulting scorn, I arose in anger and left him. That night, as I was in my room alone, he suddently entered, and throwing his arms around me, strained me to his bosom, almost distractedly, saying:

"Bear with me, Fairfield! I could not sleep with an estrangement between us. Bear with me. I am not always the same. I am an embodied war! I am not always myself!"

The tender, the childish weakness certainly possessed him now. I thought—I wished I knew which was his proper self, and which was

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the other one—whether the haughty, regnant scornful spirit, or whether the tender, loving, almost infantile nature, was his own peculiar self. I did not like to be hugged by a boy, either. I never did. There is a physical repulsion about the thing; and I felt the antipathy then, even when the affections of my soul moved so strongly toward him. I returned his embrace in a hurried manner, and then released him, loving him a hundred times more comfortably, after he had withdrawn his arms from around my waist, than I did while they encircled me; but then I possessed a cold, he an ardent temperament. He left me seemingly the happier for our reconciliation. I certainly was. For the next week or so the prince was in the ascendant, and it was perilous to any one's self-esteem to approach his highness. One day, however, when he seemed unusually gloomy, I took his hand and said:

"Wolfgang, it is useless to try to disguise the fact, or conceal it from one who loves you as well as I do—there is a secret sorrow preying on your breast, eating your heart out—an arrow cankering in your festering bosom; let the hand of friendship, of brotherly love, draw it out and dress the wound."

I had better left him alone. He turned on

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me a look of haughty indignation, and said, in a tone of withering scorn:

"'A secret sorrow—a festering wound;' verbal prettiness! And then the idea—are you perchance a reader of romances, sir?"

I was nettled, more especially as I had only my own officious impertinence to blame for the affront; but people will take vengeance on any one before their own dear selves, so I answered him, angrily:

"Yes, I am an occasional reader of romances, and they teach me, at least, one lesson of discretion, to wit, that 'where there is much mystery there is more guilt.'"

Again the broad sheet-lightning of his gray eyes blazed forth consumingly upon my face, and he turned white—white as the ashes of an intensely burning coal. I never saw such a diabolical countenance in all my life before, nor have I since. He started from me, and for days I saw nothing of him; he was ill, or sullen, in his own room. Thus ended my last attempt to win his confidence, but not our friendship, which typhoons of passion seemed to shake only to strengthening.

The summer session was soon over, and we were going home, not again to return to school, but to enter college. When we were about to

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take leave of each other, Wolfgang gave way to his impulsive and passionate nature, and embraced me cordially again and again, saying, in excuse for his emotion:

"We part, Fairfield! We shall never meet again, probably, in this world. I am not going to return here. I am going to college."

I was very much affected at his manner. I was surprised also at his announcement.

"Going to college? What college are you going to?"

"To Harvard University," he said, embracing me again.

"To Harvard? I was to have entered the University of Virginia; but, Wolfgang, why need we part, since we are Damon and Pythias —come you also to the University of Virginia."

A thundercloud darkened his brow, and once more the vivid lightning flashed from his eyes.

"No! Impossible! I cannot go there!"

"Cannot?"

"Cannot—you understand!"

"Your father is obstinate in his own choice of a university, irrespective of your taste and wishes?"

"My father is the soul of kindness and

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moderation! But, as you say, he prefers that I should enter Harvard."

"Well! my guardian will acquiesce in my wishes in that respect, and, as you cannot accompany me to Charlottesville, I must meet you at Harvard. *Au revoir.*"

We took a brotherly leave of each other, and separated to meet, at the opening of the winter term, at the university.

When I reached home my guardian was alarmed at what he called my consumptive looks; attributed it to too much confinement and too severe study, and insisted upon my remaining at home, visiting my Louisiana relations, or traveling a year before going to the university. My strength, in fact, for the last six months, had suffered some decline, but it had been so gradual that I had scarcely observed it. The change was apparent to those who had seen me in full health a half year previous.

Every one likes upon occasion to find themselves an object of interest, especially every one who, like me, had sadly missed parental affection and solicitude. I had no objection to be petted, coddled and indulged. I was easily persuaded to give up the contemplated se-

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clusion and monotony of the university for twelve months of pleasing travel-variety.

I pass over the incidents of my year of travel, as they have little to do with the subject of my story, with one exception to wit: I found, on visiting the plantation of my old bachelor uncle in East Feliciana, that he had just taken unto himself a wife; a circumstance that might seriously affect my future in one very important respect—reduce my prospects from those of a millionaire to that of a man of very modest competence, such as my moderate patrimony would afford. However, the discovery of the fact had no effect upon my mind beyond exciting my mirthfulness at the amazing secretiveness of the old gentleman about his marriage, for which I could see no rational cause. Why should he not make himself happy at fifty-five? It was late in the day to be sure, and seemed a great deal queerer in an old bachelor who had lived half a century in single blessedness than it would have looked in a widower even older. The probable loss of the heirship of his wealth gave me no sort of uneasiness. The mercenary capacities of a youth of eighteen are not usually expanded enough to take the extent, strong enough to weigh the specific gravity, or shrewd enough to estimate the value of millions. All

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they want at present is plenty of pocket money for passing fancies and follies.

My twelve months of freedom expired, and, with invigorated health and renewed ardor for study, I prepared to enter Harvard University.

It was at the opening of the winter term that I reached that place, and there I met again Wolfgang Wallraven, so changed as to be—no, not as to be unrecognizable, for his dark and wild individuality would have revealed itself through all atmospheres.

But could this tall, dignified, self-possessed, and graceful young gentleman be indeed the development of that fierce, morose boy, with his sudden gushes of tenderness, his collapses of utter weakness, and his prostrations of despair? And could this be the work of only a year?

I inquired how long he had been at the university.

He replied, "twelve months;" adding that he had remained there during the intermission between the two terms.

"That is it," thought I. "There is something in that home of his that warps, degrades, and stunts him. Ever after going home, he has returned more acrid, morose, fierce, and dangerous than before. That home! What

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an interest it has for me. With what a glamour it attracts me! I wish he would invite me to it!"

As time passed, I discovered that the character of Wallraven had undergone a change, or perhaps only an apparent change, scarcely less surprising than that of his person and manners; the wild and wayward temper, the fierce outbreaks of passion, the morose surliness, were gone or governed; the fitful, loving, tender, childlike nature had disappeared, or was suppressed; the almost servile humility with which, without giving me his confidence, he would cast himself upon my sympathy for support—fits of feebleness, or idiocy, that almost fatally betrayed his nobler nature, were utterly sunk, and the haughty, the regnant spirit had risen upon it. There was an air of regal beauty, of commanding grace, in his person and manner, such as I have never since seen in but one other man. The prince had certainly gained the permanent ascendency, and now governed the whole inner kingdom, once so discordant, conflicting and rebellious.

And yet—yet—there were times when certain gleams from his eyes seemed to warn me that all that was worst and most dangerous in

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his character was not dead, but sleeping, and gathering gigantic strength in repose; that some day, and under some circumstances, the fiend within him might break out with terrible and destroying fury.

Our mutual esteem and affection constantly increased. He was my confidant at least, and if I were not his, my matured reason convinced me that it was because the secrets of his bosom, whatever they were, could not be imparted, but he compensated me by the most devoted affection.

At the end of the term, I invited, I besought him to accompany me home; but he declined the visit. I thought that he might possibly return the courtesy by a similar invitation to me, which *en passant* I should certainly have accepted; but he did not. To be brief, we spent a year and a half together at college before either of us knew anything personally of the family of the other. At the end of every term, I renewed my invitation, which he always declined. At the close of our third term, as a matter now of habit more than of expectation, I invited him to go home with me, and, to my surprise and delight, he accepted my invitation, and prepared to accompany me.

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It was while we were on our journey that I told him my sister, Regina, would be home for the holidays, and that, above all things, I was desirous of presenting him to her, my "Queen of Beauty," my "fair one with gold locks."

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CHAPTER III.

REGINA FAIRFIELD.

Yet that fair lady's eye methinks hath less
Of deep and still and pensive tenderness
Than might beseem thy sister's—on her brow
Something too much there sits of native scorn,
And her smile kindles with a conscious glow
As from the thought of sovereign beauty born.
—MRS. HEMANS.

"The Fair One with Golden Locks" was the title of a beautiful fairy tale of an enchanted princess, of which my sister Regina used to be very fond; and in gay reference to her penchant for this, and in compliment to her high style of blond beauty, we gave her this *sobriquet*. We also called her "Queen Blanche," in flattery of her regal grace, and her exceeding, her wonderful fairness. She was, in fact, the very fairest living thing I ever saw. You have seen the wreck! amazing, beautiful, even in ruins; but that thing bears no more resemblance to my resplendent Regina than does the charred skeleton of the lightning-blasted tree to the green and stately mountain pine—heaven receive her! To return.

I had not seen my sister Regina for two years, during which time she had been absent

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at a "finishing school." I was, therefore, curious as anxious to meet her, now that she had returned home permanently. I wished to see what these two years, from sixteen to eighteen, spent at the finishing school, had done for her, who, bating pride, already embodied my idea of womanly perfection.

We reached our journey's end.

It was late in a lovely March day that we arrived at Willow Hill. We had changed our traveling dresses for drawing-room costume at the little town of A——, two miles distant, while waiting for a carriage that was to meet us there.

Therefore, upon our arrival, we were ushered at once into my sister's presence, who was already expecting us. Much as I was prepared for improvement, I confess I was surprised, delighted, and somewhat abashed, at the sight of the elegant woman awaiting our approach.

She sat erect, but at ease, in a high-backed armchair, covered with purple velvet, whose dark, rich background threw out her beautiful and graceful form in fine relief. She was arrayed in rich white satin, whose glossy and ample folds, descending to her feet, merely permitted the tip of one tiny embroidered slipper to be visible. Her arms and neck fairer than the

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satin itself, were bare, except for being delicately shaded by falls of the richest and finest lace, and encircled by pearl bracelets and necklace. Her hair, her "golden locks," were rolled off from her temples in rich and heavy folds *à la Pompadour*, and bound back by Oriental pearls, exposing a brow of frosty fairness and sovereign pride. There was a coldness in this statuesque dignity of my sister that prevented me from meeting her with any demonstration of fraternal love or joy. I think I met her then as I should have met any other "proud ladie" to whom I might have been introduced, and then I turned, and, presenting my college friend, named:

"Mr. Wallraven, of Virginia."

Regina slightly inclined her graceful head, in acknowledgment of Wallraven's profound and deferential bow, and, raising her eyes with a quick and quickly-withdrawn glance, held out her hand to welcome him to Willow Hill, saying, quite graciously:

"I know the Wallravens, of Hickory Hall, by reputations——"

Here Wolfgang gave a violent start, reeled as under an unexpected and overwhelming blow, made a mighty effort and recovered his self-command, all in a passage of a few seconds,

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while I looked inquiringly at Regina, and she, with calm surprise, regarded him.

"Will you be seated, Mr. Wallraven, and you Ferdinand?" she said.

We sat down; and Regina, possibly to fill an awkward pause in the conversation, observed:

"Yes—I know the Wallravens of Hickory Hall, by history and report. Wolfgang Wallraven—your American ancestor and namesake, sir—I heard my father say was a Lutheran refugee, who came to Virginia in the company of his intimate friend, our ancestor, Lord B——, and who, as long as his lordship remained governor of Virginia, retained a place in his council. I hope, sir, that we may become better known to each other."

On concluding these gracious words, my princess raised her eyes to those of Wallraven; but they swiftly fell again, while the faintest color dawned on her fair cheek. Wallraven had bowed, and bowed, at the close of every condescending sentence; but now, when common civility required him to say something, he was dumb. I came to his relief.

"Miss Fairfield," said I, is quite *au fait* to the early history, antiquities, and traditions of the Old Dominion, for which she had a great veneration. She is rich in legendary lore, and,

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though born in Alabama, evidently considers Virginia her mother country, and infinitely prefers it to her native soil."

"For many excellent reasons, without a doubt," said Wallraven, with a bow toward my fair queen, who, with her snowy eyelids drooped till her long, golden lashes rested on her delicately-roseate cheek, remained silent. Now I came to her succor.

"Regina likes the conservative pride of the Old Dominion—the prevalence of old English feeling—family pride, which Mother England herself has outlived, but that still survives in her eldest daughter, Virginia, the child that most resembles her. It is a prejudice—an anti-republican thing, contrary to the spirit of the nineteenth century. You are lagging behind the age, Regina, but you will get over this."

A cold smile chilled the fair face of my sister, who deigned no other reply.

"This is not so, lady, my friend exaggerates; these are not your sentiments," said Wallraven, in his deep, rich tones, and with a manner in which was strangely blended deprecation and dignity.

She quietly raised those golden eyelashes, to drop them again instantly, as she replied:

"Yes! since I am constrained to confess it;

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and surely I may do so without offense in the presence of one of so old and pure a stock as the Wallravens, of Hickory Hall, whose family can be traced back to the time of the Saxon Heptarchy. Yes, I do think that the much-ridiculed family pride of Maryland and Virginia, ridiculed, however, only by vulgar wits among the *nouveaux riches* of other States, is, at least, far more worthy of respect than the low pride of new wealth, or appearance of wealth, which is oftentimes no more than superficial finery. The ancient pride of the old families of Maryland and Virginia is assuredly well grounded. Many of them, the Wallravens among the rest," (inclining her head graciously to Wolfgang) "are assuredly descended from the very flower of the old English aristocracy—many among them dating back to a period long anterior to the Norman Conquest, and numbering in their line some of the most illustrious among the warriors, statesmen, and churchmen of England —noble scions of noble houses, who, for their conservatism, and attachment to the *acien regimé* were driven out by that fanatical spirit of radicalism which, even in the reign of James, began to manifest itself in Great Britain."

"It is true, lady, that the rich valleys and plains of Maryland and Virginia were settled by

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a very different set of men, actuated by a very opposite set of motives, to those that sent the hardy Puritans to the sterile shores of New England; and that may go far to account for different domestic and social manners, and a different State policy."

"I confess I prefer the ancestral pride of a Virginia planter to the purse pride of a Yankee peddler."

"Those are extreme cases, lady."

"Sir, have you no pride of ancestry? Is it not a matter of self-esteem to you that your remote progenitor was a Saxon noble instead of being a Saxon serf?"

"No, lady, it is not a matter of pride to me," said Wolfgang, in a tone so mournful that I looked anxiously upon him. "I own, I honor New England for the perfectly level platform on which all her sons stand with equal rights."

"Let us change the subject," said I.

"With pleasure," said Regina; and, turning to Wolfgang, she asked: "Do you like music, Mr. Wallraven? I have a very rich pianoforte, in fine tune just now."

Wolfgang instantly declared a passion for music, and, as Regina arose, he offered her his arm, to take her across the room; but she declined the civility with a stately inclination of

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the head, and, dropping her golden eyelashes, swept on alone in sovereign grace and beauty, and seated herself before the instrument. We followed her. Wolfgang took a station at the back of her chair, to turn the leaves of her music book. She played and sung several pieces in a very masterly style; but they were all of one character—grand, martial, heroic. At the end of the last piece the folding doors were thrown open, and a servant appeared and announced supper. Now rising, and again courteously declining the proffered arm of Wallraven, and moving on alone in her regal pride and purity, she preceded us to the supper-room.

After supper, we adjourned to the drawing-room, where we passed the evening in conversation, in music, in the examination of new books, prints, such articles of *vertu* as were scattered around, and in projecting plans for the next day's occupation and amusement; no very difficult thing for three persons alone in a country house together, for our guardian was absent.

Soon after this we separated for the night. I accompanied Wallraven to his room.

"Well, Wallraven," said I, as soon as we were alone, "how do you like my sister? Is she 'all

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my fancy painted her,' or am I a blind enthusiast?"

"Brothers are, of all persons, the least apt to be," dryly replied Wolfgang, who seemed to be threatened with a return of his old boyish surliness.

"And brothers' friends are in no danger of becoming so," said I, good-humoredly.

Without noticing my last remark, he said, in the slow oracular tone of a judge balancing the weight of every word:

"Miss Fairfield is beautiful—she is beauty; but, like the mountain snow, she is high, cold, pure, fair, frosty."

"Ah!" said I, "the least lovely of Regina's traits of character has revealed itself this evening. Lofty principles, high-toned sense of honor, perfect truthfulness, large benevolence, generosity, a rich and well-cultivated intellect —the treasures of the heart and mind—remain to be discovered!"

"Fairneld! don't fling your sister into my arms so determinedly, lest I catch her!" replied Wallraven, with a sarcastic smile that raised my anger to such a pitch as very nearly to make me forget that he was my guest. I replied in a cold and haughty tone:

"Miss Fairfield is not a womn to be thrown

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or caught, or by any means to suggest such a thought."

"Of course not! It is you who suggest it! Pooh, Fairfield! 'an arrow from Cupid's bow'—to express the thing as you would express it—is slightly quivering in my flesh. I can easily pluck it out and cast it from me, if you will allow me to do so. Do not you drive it to my heart, impale me with it—for nothing would ensue but death! Miss Fairfield will probably bestow her hand upon some 'magnificent son of Acbar' who will be quite worthy of her!"

"I should like to know what you mean by presuming to consider what I have said to you in the light you do. What right have you to do so?"

"Only the right of knowledge, a fatal gift of insight into the hearts of others, and a dangerous habit of reading aloud what I find written therein," he replied, with mournful sarcasm.

I looked at him from head to foot. He was sitting in an easy-chair, with his hands joined on his knees, his brigand-looking head bent forward, his piercing eyes fixed on the floor, and his veil of jet-black hair falling forward and shading his darkling countenance. There was so much bitter sorrow in his attitude, expression, and tone, that my displeasure fled.

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"Wolfgang!" said I, "what is it that makes me love you so? You say the most exasperating things to me, and then disarm my wrath by a look, a tone?"

"What—is it, perhaps, that you feel I am your friend? Fairfield, my dear fellow, put me in no future plans of your own. The greatest injury I could do myself, the greatest benefit I could confer upon you, is to tell you this. Leave me. Good-night!"

We met next morning early. Like most houses in this neighborhood, our houses had long piazzas, upstairs and down, running around three sides of the house, with the front room windows all opening on hinges upon them. Therefore, as I opened my chamber door and stepped out upon the piazza, I saw that Wallraven had come out of his room, and was promenading there. He turned, smiling, to meet me, took my arm, and said something complimentary of the "beautiful country," now in full spring bloom, though the month was March. After promenading there for some time, enjoying the pure morning air and the extensive prospect, we went below and entered the morning-room. It was a long, handsomely-furnished apartment.

Regina was standing at the upper end of the

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room, attended by two maid-servants, to whom she was giving some directions, and who, as we entered, left her, and passed out by a side door.

Regina came to meet us. She wore a pure white morning-dress of some very transparent light tissue, with the skirt made very full, whose gossamer folds floated gracefully with every movement of her queenly form. Her golden hair was rolled back from her snowy forehead, as on the evening before, only, instead of the jeweled bandeau, it was bound by a narrow white ribbon. She held in her hand a few white lilies, whose perfume filled the air. If I could find a word to express the union of the loftiest *hauteur* with the clearest purity and the most aerial delicacy, I would use that word to describe Regina, as, wafting fragrance with every motion, she floated on to meet us.

"Do you like lilies, Mr. Wallraven. These are the first the gardener has sent me. They are very fine," she said, separating one from her bunch and offering it to Wolfgang.

"It is your favorite flower, Miss Fairfield."

"Why do you think so?"

"They resemble you—more! they express you!"

Regina dropped those white eyelids again, and, moving on before us, said:

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"Come, then, and I will show you how much I like lilies;" and, leaving the room, she floated on, followed by us through the wide hall, and into an elegant little boudoir, whose glass doors opened upon a small but beautiful garden of white lilies, in the center of which was a clear pond, its borders fringed with white lilies, and its water reflecting the graceful forms of two white swans that sailed upon its bosom.

"This is the way I like lilies."

"And all things that express elegance, purity, and pride," said Wolfgang, pointing to the swans.

Yes, the unity and harmony of purity, pride, and elegance, revealed itself in Regina's whole being—her form, features, and complexion—her tastes, habits, and occupations.

We spent the hour before breakfast in the boudoir.

Soon after breakfast another little incident occurred that exhibited my sister's worst trait in rather an unfavorable light. We had returned to the morning-room to await the horses, which were ordered to be brought round at ten for us to take a ride over the plantation. We were passing the few moments in conversation, when we saw a handsome barouche drawn by a pair of splendid dappled

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grays approach, and stop before the house. In an instant I saw Regina's lip curl with that supercilious expression, all but too familiar in her countenance, and she said:

"It is the carriage of Mrs. and the Misses O'Blemmis. Ferdinand, do you remember them?"

"I do not, my dear."

"No, truly. Mr. Wallraven, five years ago a young Irishman by the name of O'Blemmis was engaged as tutor to the only son of the late Colonel Sumner, of Hyde Place. He was a puny boy, and died, but the Irishman, who did not drink, married the boy's sister, got the estate, and brought out his mother and half-a-dozen of his own sisters to help him enjoy it. You shall presently see them all. And by the way, Mr. Wallraven, here is a thing I have seldom seen or heard observed of Irish character, and yet my own observation of this proves the truth of it to my own mind, viz.: whenever a young Irishman comes to America, and is temperate, he makes sooner or later, by perseverance or by *coup-de-main*, a fortune. Here they are."

And the door was thrown open, and the servant announced: "Mrs. O'Blemmis, M[illegible]

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O'Blemmis, Miss Bridget O'Blemmis;" and those ladies entered.

My sister received them with something more than *hauteur,* which they were certainly too acute to misunderstand, while they were too polite to resent. Wallraven and myself exerted our conversational powers as an atonement for Miss Fairfield's coolness.

I am not going to tire you with a report of this visit that tired me. I mentioned it merely to remark that, after this visit—throughout the ride, and, indeed, throughout the day—Wallraven's manners to Regina were marked by a freezing respect, somewhat similar to that she had shown the O'Blemmises, and that this slightly discomposed the air of elegant ease that ever distinguished Miss Fairfield.

On our return home that evening, Wallraven retired early to his chamber, which he likewise kept during the greater part of the next day, excusing himself upon the plea of having letters to write home. This gave me the first opportunity I had had since my return of being alone with my sister.

We talked of family matters first. She informed me that our uncle's young wife had a fine son, which fact, though it cut us off from

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an immense fortune, did not afflict us much. Our mercenary years had not come.

Then we talked of Wallraven. Regina acknowledged then, what I am sure she would not have confessed a month later, that she had found Wallraven exceedingly interesting.

"Yes, Ferdinand, the most absorbing person that ever engaged my thoughts! What an air he has! too dark, far too dark and tragic for society; yet one sees that it has its cause in some stern, hard truth. His face is so full of expression, and so deep in interest. His countenance affects me with a creeping terror such as one feels in looking down at night into a profound abyss. And, then, his moods are so opposite and contradictory: at one time he has the majestic air of a monarch in full sway of his power; at another, almost that of a slave. And in the most favorable mood he has that air of passive defiance, of proud humility, such as might become a dethroned prince as he bows his royal neck, and lays his uncrowned head upon the block! And in every action there is such earnest, such profound truth!"

"He is a strange being, full of discord. Yes, his soul is the 'profound abyss' to which you have likened his expression of countenance,

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with the night of deep sorrow darkening it forever!"

"This is really so?"

"Really and truly so; and has been so ever since first I knew him when he was a boy!"

"And the nature of his sorrow?"

"I do not know—cannot even conjecture. I have been his bosom friend for years, and he has never confided it to me. I have exhausted every honorable means of discovering, and cannot find the slightest clew. Of one thing, however, I am positively certain, that guilt has nothing to do with his calamity. I feel that in a thousand instincts! And when I say that, I mean neither his guilt, the idea of which would be preposterous, nor that of his parents."

"I believe you! The name of the Wallravens has, for centuries, been the synonym for an almost chivalric virtue, for an almost romantic standard of honor. Upon account of their absolute purity they have been twitted with 'knight errantry.' This Wolfgang, how he occupies me! Oh! Ferdinand, after all, you have not been a friend, or you would have disburdened his heart of this secret before now!"

"That is all you know of the matter, my dear Regina! I have exposed myself to insult more

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than once in trying to serve him; but never since we met at Harvard."

Regina did not reply to this, but fell into deep thought, which lasted some moments; then, with a profound, but involuntary, sigh, she rose and left the room to dress for the evening.

Wallraven joined us in the drawing-room in the evening; and I, with a view of making the next day pass more gayly than this had done, proposed various projects of amusement. Among other plans, I suggested that we should ride to town the next morning, and spend the day, and go in the evening to the theater, to see Booth play "Othello." Regina at once, and most decisively, vetoed this proposition.

"It must necessarily be the most loathsome of all conceivable exhibitions!" she said, "and I wonder how its representation upon any stage should be tolerated for a single hour."

The plan was, of course, abandoned, and another substituted in its place. Soon after that we separated for the night.

One discovery in physics and metaphysics, I had made in the course of this week, to wit: that love at first sight was a fact, and no poetic fiction. Regina, with all her cold *hauteur*, could not to save her soul alive, raise her eyes to meet Wolfgang's; and Wallraven's deep bass

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tones trembled when he spoke to her. I was pleased. Regina's first passion was aristocracy, her second, Old Virginia. Here, then, was a young gentleman that she herself had placed among the oldest and most aristocratic in the State, he himself the most distinguished-looking of his distinguished race, and his large patri-
ial estate lying in the richest and most
ul region of country and in the midst
ost wealthy and aristocratic neighbor-
Old Dominion—among those who
he friends and relatives of her
for centuries past. Could I have
stiny for my fair, proud sister, it
e been this. Could Regina have
ate for herself, it would have been
d Wallraven—to adore, or not to adore Regina, was now no matter of volition with him!

Let me hurry on.

We remained at Willow Hill six weeks. During this time I could not fail to observe the deep and ever-deepening interest with which my friend and my sister regarded each other, nor the anxiety with which each constantly sought to conceal these sentiments from the other. Regina's manner was cold and haughty; Wallraven's distant and reserved.

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Yet Wallraven would grow cold as death if her hand but chanced to touch him; and Regina would tremble if he suddenly came in her sight.

Every week Wallraven's gloom deepened, while Regina's delicate color faded.

I was provoked with both. Why should Regina act the empress and exaggerate the part so abominably! and why should Wallraven be so easily flouted off—so backward?—for that appeared to me then to be the position of affairs between them.

As the day of departure drew near, they treated each other with the most frigid coldness.

The last day of our stay at length arrived. We remained at home all day, preparing for our departure. We were to ride to A——, to meet the stage, as it passed at five o'clock the next morning. To effect this, we were to leave the house at four. We were to take leave of Regina over night.

Regina, Wallraven, and myself passed the evening together in the drawing-room. Regina gave us music, but I saw that her touch was inaccurate, and that her voice trembled. It had been arranged that we should retire early, to be in time for the stage, so at ten o'clock, I gave the signal, and we arose.

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I went to Regina, to bid her adieu. She was fearfully, ghastly white, and trembling so that she was compelled to grasp the chair for support. I took her hand: it was cold, and even heavy—pressed it to my lips, and turned away.

Wallraven approached her, to take his leave. He coldly received the hand she coldly extended to him. Both raised their eyes simultaneously—their gaze, full of anguish, full of mutual reproach, of mutual inquiry—met—and then—suddenly, in an instant, forgetful of time, place, and circumstances—forgetful of etiquette and propriety—utterly oblivious of my presence and observation—he madly, passionately, caught her, strained her to his bosom, pressing a kiss on her face, while she dropped her head upon his breast, and, bursting into tears, sobbed convulsively, hysterically.

He lifted her and bore her to the sofa, laid her there, knelt by her side, squeezing her hands, stroking her brow and murmuring words of passionate devotion and tenderness!

I was *de trop*—I felt it. I went out, but scarcely had I time to reach my own chamber, before I heard Wolfgang run up the stairs, and, bursting his door open, rush in, and clang it to behind him. I scarcely wondered at any ec-

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centricity of Wallraven's! I set down this piece of conduct to the wildness of joy.

Mentally resolving that our journey must now be deferred a day or two, and that, therefore, there was no longer a necessity of hastening to bed, I went down into the drawing-room, for the purpose of finding and congratulating my sister. The drawing-room was vacant, she had gone to her chamber. I returned to mine in a well-satisfied frame of mind; but I wished to see Wallraven again.

Before retiring to bed that night I tapped at his door, and then, without waiting for leave, and with the freedom of old friendship, I pushed the door open, and entered the room.

Good heaven! were the old horrid days of the preparatory school come back, and with a vengeance, too! He was sitting bolt upright at the foot of his bed, his hands on his knees, his open gray eyes staring into vacancy, his black locks hanging wildly, elf-like, about his livid and haggard cheeks, his whole appearance cold, stiff, corpse-like. A blood-guilty and unconverted criminal on the eve of his execution —a man in a cataleptic fit—one struck dead by a thunderbolt—might sit so rigid, statue-like, still. My very blood ran cold with a vague horror, as I looked at him.

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Terrified for his health, for his life, I sprang toward him, seized his frozen hands, gazed into his stony eyes, placed my hand upon his death-like brow. At that touch a shudder ran all over him, relaxing the rigidity of his form, and he laughed! Such a sardonic, such a maniacal, such a devilish laugh, I never heard in my life before, and never wish to hear again! It was not loud, but long, low, and bitter. Dreadfully alarmed for his sanity, I exclaimed:

"In the name of heaven, Wallraven, what is the matter? Speak! Tell me, I conjure you!"

Again the shudder, again the long, low, and bitter laugh, and then he said:

"Am I not a Wallraven, whose family dates back to a period anterior to the Saxon Heptarchy?"

I gazed at him in a fixed horror. He seemed to know my thoughts, for he replied to them sardonically:

"I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and soberness. Ask that snow-queen of beauty, your fair, proud sister!"

I was spellbound by grief and terror. I could not stir. I gazed at him.

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"I am not mad! I would to heaven I were!
For then 'tis like I should forget myself.
Oh! if I could, what grief should I forget!
I am not mad! This hair I tear is mine,"

he declaimed, travestying the lines with sardonic exaggeration, and finishing with a shouting laugh of mockery.

"Oh! heaven! but this is horrible! Wallraven! Wallraven!"

"I am not mad!" he said, with an omnipotent effort that at length sent apart the curdled blood in his veins, and dispersed the storm-clouds that darkened over his spirit.

"Oh! Wolfgang! Wolfgang! you are not mad, but you will become so. You will inevitably become so, if this secret suffering of yours recommences and augments so fearfully!" said I.

A spasm convulsed his frame. He dropped his head upon his hands, and his stringy black locks fell forward, veiling both.

"Oh! Wolfgang, my heart's dearest brother, is there no way in which I can relieve, can serve you?"

Again the spasm shook him.

"I will not, as in the days of my thoughtless boyhood, ask you for your secret, my soul's dear Wolfgang, but——"

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"But I will tell you! I will tell you!" he exclaimed, desperately, "tell you while my good angel has power over me! while *her* escape is possible! tell you the dark and fatal thing that has burned, blighted, and blasted me and mine forever! Listen!"

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CHAPTER IV.

THE REVELATION.

Well, I listened eagerly, too eagerly. He paused, dropped his head upon his hands, and seemed to be diving into the past.

Deep silence reigned between us, broken only by the supernaturally loud ticking of the chamber clock, hurrying on toward midnight. There he sat upon the foot of the bed, his elbows resting on his knees, his face buried in the palms of his hands, his stringy, jet-black locks falling forward, shudder after shudder shaking his frame!

"Poor fellow! he does not know how to begin," thought I, and waited anxiously some time, a feeling of delicacy withholding me from interrupting him, until I found, by the cessation of his shudders and the perfect immobility of his form, that he had fallen into a fit of deep abstraction, and that his thoughts were far, far from me. Then, after some hesitation, I recalled him, by a word spoken in a low, gentle tone:

"Wallraven!"

He started slightly, raised his shaggy black

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head, and gazed upon me from his light gray eyes, with the bewildering look of one awakened from a deep sleep, with a dream still overshadowing his spirits.

"Wallraven!" said I again, in a still kinder tone, "you were about to give me———"

"Ha! ha! ha! Oh, thou son of Eve! Never tell me of woman's curiosity! We have not a bit, have we?" laughed he, in the most sarcastic and exasperating manner.

You will wonder, perhaps, at the strange patience I had with that bitter and sardonic youth; but, in truth, I was more pained than angry at his sarcastic and insulting tone, for under all was betrayed the profoundest sorrow, the acutest suffering. I felt the same compassionate toleration for his ill-temper that we feel for the irritability of any dearly-loved sufferer. I replied, gently:

"I did not solicit your confidence, Wolfgang. It was voluntarily proffered on your part; and I tell you now that, unless by so doing I can very materially serve you, I have no wish to pry into your secrets further than fidelity to my sister's interests under existing circumstances seems to require."

"To what existing circumstances do you refer?" he asked, quickly.

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"To your relations, or implied relations, with Miss Fairfield."

"And what do you suppose them to be?"

"From what I witnessed this evening, I presume that you are engaged," I replied, gazing at him with anxious scrutiny.

"You are wrong—we are not engaged!"

"Not! Is it possible that Regina has rejected you?"

"No; for I have not offered her my hand."

"What! not! Then you intend to do so at the first opportunity."

"No! I have no intention of ever offering myself to Miss Fairfield!"

"Then, by heaven! much as I have forgiven you upon my own account, you shall first give me satistaction for your unpardonable conduct of this evening, and then swear never to offend Miss Fairfield by coming into her presence again."

"Oh! Ferdinand, my fine fellow, don't flare up. You do not know what you are talking about!"

"I say I will have satisfaction!"

"And so you shall; any and every satisfaction you please, and as much of it as you please! Come, I will fight, or apologize, as you will."

"Sir, you are my guest. I beseech you, with

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all convenient speed that you put yourself in some more practicable relation to the brother of the woman you have offended, that he may——"

"Blow my brains out with better grace!"

"Call you to a strict account for your proceedings this evening."

"I have betrayed friendship, trust, hospitality; I merit death! Shoot me where I sit, Ferdinand; I wish you would!"

"You are mad."

"I kissed her twenty times, Ferdinand, and I never intend to marry her. Come, why don't you shoot me?"

"You are a lunatic—you are not responsible for any word or act," said I, and I was beginning to feel so. If I had been ever so angry with him, my resentment would have vanished when, with one of his sudden changes of mood he dropped his head upon my shoulder, and sobbed and wept like the melting of an avalanche, gasping between whiles, in low, earnest, fervent, interrupted tones:

"I love and worship your beautiful and haughty sister! Love her because she is fair, worship her because she is proud! Yes! yes! I worship the ground she walks on—for it is holy ground; the pebble her foot spurns—for it

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is a precious stone! Words! words! breath! air! Look you! People have talked about dying for their beloved! I am doing it! I am doing it!"

Language cannot convey the heart-rending tone in which these words were spoken. He went on:

"Yes! yes! I will account for my 'conduct' of this evening! I had firmly repressed my feelings for six weeks. I thought the danger over, or well-nigh over! I went up to her to-night to bid her adieu, with the stern determination of never, never seeing her again. She held out her hand—looking up to me with her beautiful, bewildering, maddening eyes—eloquent with love, sorrow, reproach, inquiry—and, the great tide of long-suppressed emotion rushed in, filling my heart, flooding my brain, bearing down and sweeping away reason, memory, understanding! and I did and said—some maniacal things! Come, shoot me, if you please! Yes, I will meet you when and where you please, and bare my bosom to your knife or ball, but never raise my hand against you, my brother, my heart's dear brother! In the name of heaven, then, why don't you speak to me?"

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"Because I have nothing to say. I am mystified and miserable!"

"Yet, oh! do not shut up your heart to me! do not! You love me! do not, therefore, lay up remorse for all your long future life, by harshness to me now—for look you! my life will be short—my death violent! I know it! Speak to me!"

"Alas! Wallraven, what shall I say? You entreat me not to shut up my heart to you. I do not do it. On the contrary, it is you who closes yours to me. Yet do not misunderstand me, I do not complain of this, though the passion you have declared for my sister—a passion I see but too clearly exists, and is reciprocated—makes me extremely anxious upon account of Regina, when I reflect upon the dark mystery which you confess has blighted your own life, and dread may blight hers!"

He dropped his head upon my shoulder again, and, with a huge heart-sob, gasped:

"I cannot! I cannot! I cannot, by the broken heart of my dead mother! by the smitten brow of my gray-haired father! I cannot reveal to you this blasting mystery! I have tried hard this evening to tell you, and the words 'stick in my throat!' But this I will promise you—never to see Miss Fairfield again! Ah! you

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cannot guess the suffering I bring myself, the suffering I withhold from you, on making this promise!"

"I do not demand such a promise; yet—but, Wolfgang, such a demand will depend upon your reception of a question I am about to ask you, which you may answer or not, just as you see fit. This dark secret—is it connected with guilt or with disease?"

"No! no! no! God knows, that whatever may be their other misfortunes, the Wallravens are physically, mentally, and morally sound!"

"Why, so I have always heard of them. They are even proverbial for those qualities. Now, in the name of heaven, give me your hand, Wolfgang! Win Regina if you can! I feel sure that your distress, whatever it may be, is morbid. Nonsense! Love and friendship will cure you. What! Young, healthy, handsome, moral, intelligent, accomplished, wealthy, and of high rank, loving and beloved, with no one to cross your wishes—what should trouble you? I begin to think you are a mere hypochondriac"—and so I did.

You will pronounce this hasty confidence very wrong—so it doubtless was; but I loved Wolfgang Wallraven with more than a brother's love; I was by nature trusting to a

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fault; I was inexperienced; and I have expiated the error by suffering in every vein of my heart and brain!

The next morning we set out on our return to the North, Wolfgang insisting upon our going, as previously arranged. I had stopped at Regina's door, to see if possibly she was up, but all was dark and silent in her room. We left without seeing her again.

We reached the university some time after the commencement of the term, and had to apply ourselves with double vigor and perseverance to our studies, in order to make up for lost time.

From the day of our re-entrance into college, Wallraven was everything that the most exacting and fastidious friend could desire him to be —calm, self-possessed, dignified, gracious— though seldom, perhaps never, cheerful. He never voluntarily mentioned Regina to me; and if ever I would name her to him, he would govern a strongly rising emotion, and say: "As Milton toiled for fame, as Napoleon toiled for dominion, so I toil for Regina! One day, when wealth, and fame, and power, and dominion—such dominion as God gives genius—are mine, I may win her! When I have power to place her in the highest rank of society, in the

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most civilized city in a yet uncivilized world, then I will ask her to share her fate with mine—not till then!" or something like it. He did toil. He gained the highest approbation, the honor of the professors. The most brilliant auguries were drawn for his future. I shared them. I felt his power. I felt that if he could once conquer a peace in his own bosom, he might become just what he pleased.

As for Regina, she never mentioned him in any of her letters to me; but I knew too well that he was not forgotten, by the tone of sadness that pervaded all her expressed thoughts and feelings.

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CHAPTER V.

THE INSIDE OF THE OLD HALL.

"A lonesome lodge,
That stands so low in lonely glen,
The grim, tall windowes, dim and darke,
Are hung with Ivy brier and Yewe;
No shimmering sun here ever shone,
No halesome breeze here ever blewe,
No child, no matron, may you spye,
No cheerful host."—PERCY'S RELIQUES.

The winter vacation approached, and I once more pressed Wallraven to return home with me and spend Christmas. He declined the invitation, and, to my surprise and delight, invited me to accompany him to his own home in Virginia. I accepted his proffered hospitality with much pleasure, and, writing Regina not to expect me there during the holidays, I prepared to accompany Wolfgang to Hickory Hall.

I cannot tell you with what interest, with what highly excited curiosity, I set out upon this journey to the interior of Virginia. I do not know what I expected to find; I only know that an old and unknown country house always possessed a mystic charm for me; and here was

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one that, with its own peculiar mystery, took hold of both affection and imagination.

We journeyed by stage until we reached Washington City.

There, at the Indian Queen Hotel, we met Mr. Wallraven's handsome traveling carriage, with the splendid black horses, the well-dressed coachman, and mounted outrider.

Early upon the morning succeeding our arrival at Washington City, we set out for the valley of Virginia. You know how wild and beautiful, how savage and sublime the scenery becomes as you approach the Blue Ridge. We traveled by easy stages, and were two days in reaching the grand pass of the Bear's Walk.

It was the evening of the second day when we began slowly to ascend the mountain.

It was nearly pitch dark. Floating masses of black, heavy, and lowering clouds obscured every ray, even of starlight. It was intensely, biting cold. Down from our right opened, as it seemed, to the very center of the earth, a vast profound abyss of blackness, cloud and shadow, from the depths of which gleamed fitfully a lurid stream of red light, flitting hither and thither as we moved, like a jack-o'-lantern, amid the blackness of that ocean of shadows.

"That is our destination, that is my home—

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Hickory Hall," said Wallraven, pointing to the eifish light.

"That! How, in the name of Providence, are we to get down there?" inquired I, in real anxiety.

"The road is certainly very dangerous on such a night as this, and I am about to order the lamps lighted." This command he accordingly gave, and the carriage was stopped, and the lamps lighted.

We started again, and, soon turning sharply to the right, began to descend into the vale; but before we had proceeded many yards the coachman drew up the horses, and, turning round, said that the lamps only made the matter worse; that the lights and shadows on the downward and precipitous road were deceptive and dangerous; and finally gave it as his opinion that we had better alight and walk down, which we accordingly did, or, rather, we climbed down —while the coachman led his horses slowly and carefully behind us. An hour's hard toil brought us to the foot of the mountain, where we resumed our seats in the carriage, and were driven swiftly toward the lurid light that marked the site of Hickory Hall. The carriage passed through an arched and broken gateway, the light fitfully falling upon the frag-

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ments of the old and glistening red sandstone that had once formed the pillars of the gate. We stopped immediately before the broad old-fashioned hall door, to which a flight of broad oak stairs and a portico led.

An old white-headed negro, with a candle in his hand, came out and met us at the door, and saluting Wallraven as "Master Wolfgang," showed us into one of those wainscoted halls so common to the old mansion houses throughout the old neighborhoods of Virginia. The dark and polished oak floor was uncarpeted, and the vast room was lighted up, as with a conflagration, by an immense fire of large and blazing hickory logs that roared and crackled in the huge chimney. Grim portraits frowned from the dark, oak-paneled walls, and the battle of Yorktown raged furiously above the chimney-piece. Four or five richly carved high-back chairs drew themselves haughtily up, repelling all advances. Nothing looked hearty and cheerful but the great and glowing fire, that warmed and blazed and crackled so gayly as to make amends for all.

"Will you go to your room now, or wait till after supper, Fairfield? John, how soon will supper be ready?" asked Wolfgang of me, and of the negro, in a breath.

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"In half an hour, sir," replied the old man who had conducted us in.

"In half an hour; well, Fairfield, what say you? Will you go to your own room? or—— John?"

"Sir!"

"What chamber have you got ready for Mr. Fairfield?"

"Mrs. Wallraven's room, sir."

"The deuce!"

"Yes, sir. You wrote us that the young gentleman was delicate, and that his room must be comfortable. Now, sir, Mrs. Wallraven's room is the only one as doesn't leak when it rains, and it is coming on to rain, sir."

"Very well. Is there a fire kindled there?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are Mr. Fairfield's trunks carried up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Fairfield, will you go now to your room to change your dress, or will you remain here until after supper?"

"I will remain here, Wallraven; but I am sadly afraid, my dear fellow, that I have turned some one, some lady, out of her room—that would be dreadful!"

"Some lady! Humph! romancing again.

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What lady do you fancy you have turned out of her room?"

"Mrs. Wallraven."

"Ah, Mrs. Wallraven, certainly. It was Mrs.Wallraven's chamber; but she was the last occupant, and she has not used it for some time! Be easy, my dear fellow, the room is yours—only I hope it really don't leak."

"John!"

"Sir!"

"Where is my father?"

"In his library, sir."

"Let him know that we have arrived. He expected us to-night."

"Yes, sir."

"Go, then."

The old servant left the room, and soon after the door opened.

A tall and venerable old gentleman, clothed in deep mourning, and with a head of hair as white as the driven snow, appeared. Wolfgang sprang, bounded to meet him. The old man opened his arms, and silently and sadly folded his son to his bosom. Then he came to me, and with a singular blending of sweetness, sadness, and dignity, welcomed me to his house. He had scarcely done so, when the door once more opened.

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I raised my eyes to see one of the most majestic and beautiful women I ever beheld advancing within it. She, like the old gentleman, was dressed in deep mourning, and her fine black hair, glittering in a thousand jetty ripples, was turned in large Madonna loops down her cheeks, carried back, and woven in a large knot behind. She was too tall and too dark for my ideal of feminine beauty, but then her form was so finely rounded, her face so graciously, richly beautiful—a Cleopatra she was, such as we picture the Egyptian Queen for whom a world was lost!

"My daughter, Miss Wallraven," said the old gentleman, as the lady came in; and then: "Constantia, my child, this is Mr. Fairfield, with whom Wolfgang, by his letters, has already made us well acquainted. Welcome him to Hickory Hall."

Miss Wallraven offered me the most beautiful dark hand I ever saw, and looked at me with a pair of large, dark, humid eyes, whose languid lustre haunted me many a day and night thereafter, and, in a voice whose tones were at once very low, and very full, round, and melodious, cordially bade me welcome.

In a few moments after this supper was announced, and we went to the table. Such a

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supper! It was such as only Virginia housekeepers know how to set out.

Yes, the supper was perfect—not so the company. Wolfgang was sombre; the old gentleman's manner grave and courteous; Miss Wallraven's dignified and gracious; all very admirable, but not at all enlivening.

I felt an enthusiastic admiration of Miss Wallraven; but it was precisely the sort of admiration one would feel at suddenly beholding some marvelous masterpiece of nature or of art—some richly, gorgeously beautiful creation, whose very existence seemed a wonder. "Queen of Egypt," "Cleopatra," "Night," Starlight," all things darkly splendid, grandly beautiful, seemed parallels for her. Gazing on her, I caught myself repeating these lines of Byron, and thinking how strikingly they portrayed her:

> "She walks in beauty, like the night
> Of cloudless climes and starry skies,
> And all that's best of dark and bright
> Meet in her aspect and her eyes."

After supper we returned to the old wainscoated hall; more logs were thrown on the blazing fire, and we gathered around it. The evening passed pleasantly, with conversation, music, etc. At eleven o'clock we separated for the night, and Wolfgang himself attended me to

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my room. It was in the second story. In keeping with all the house, it was an old-fashioned apartment, the two principal features being a large tent bedstead hung with dark-green damask, and a wide fireplace, in which burned and glowed that inevitable country blessing, a good wood fire.

"I will repeat your question. 'How do you like my sister,' Fairfield?"

"Yes! that was friendly—was it not? You never mentioned your sister to me before; never prepared a poor fellow for the danger that lay before him—a regular ambuscade!"

I repented this flippant speech in a moment, when I saw how seriously Wolfgang took it.

"I am no egotist; I never was. I do not talk of myself and my family; I never did," he replied.

"Pooh! You mean to accuse me of egotism, because I have talked to you so much about my sister. Well, it is true I thought Regina the very *chef d'œuvre* of nature until I saw Miss Wallraven! She has astonished me! She has taken away my breath with admiration! with wonder! Can beauty like that exist anywhere else than in the ideal world of poets and artists? Can such beauty really live

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and move, and have its being in the actual world? be sensible to sight and touch?"

Wallraven loked really offended.

"Come!" said he, "Constantia never set up for good looks that ever I heard; most certainly she has no pretensions to beauty; and, as to rivaling Miss Fairfield in that respect—pshaw! Fairfield. Constantia is no subject for jest, let me tell you! When I asked you how you liked my sister, I meant how did you like her as a pretty good girl, altogether?"

"And I tell you that she takes my breath away with her unparalleled, her wonderful beauty!"

"I marvel if you are crazy, or sarcastic!"

"I am in earnest—deeply in earnest——"

"When you say Constantia is good-looking?"

"When I say she is magnificently beautiful!"

"Heaven mend your taste! Why, she is too tall, too large, too dark!"

"So was that wonderous Queen of Egypt, for whom the demi-god, Marc Antony, lost the world!"

"Hum! Go to bed, Fairfield."

"She is the only Cleopatra I ever saw, or dreamed of!"

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"You have been reading poetry. Good-night, Fairfield! Daylight, breakfast, and a fox-hunt to-morrow, will set you right! Get to sleep as soon as you can."

He left me, evidently sincere in his natural brotherly blindness to his sister's superb style of beauty.

I was in fact dreadfully wearied out, and, as soon as he had left me, I threw off my clothes, blew out the candle, and jumped into bed.

I could not sleep.

The blazing hickory fire in the fireplace illuminated the whole room with a dazzling brilliancy that would have left sleep out of the question, even if a female face, beautiful as a houri, had not gazed mournfully at me from the wall opposite the blazing fire. It was Constantia's dark face, with less of dignity and more of love, more of sorrow, more of religion, in its expression. "The eyes were shadowy, full of thought and prayer." It was a Madonna countenance, and the longer I looked at it, the more I adored it. Yes! it was not a face to be passed over with mere admiration, however ardent that admiration might be—it was a face to be adored; and as I gazed upon its heavenly loveliness, something like religious devotion moved in my bosom and almost impelled me to

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kneel before that image of divine beauty, love, and sorrow. I fell asleep, at last, with my imagination full of that celestial countenance and my soul full of prayer.

Suddenly I awoke with a start! It seemed to me that I had been aroused from slumber as by the shock of a galvanic battery. I trembled even after I was awake as with a vague terror, of which I should have felt ashamed had I not ascribed it to a hot supper and the nightmare. I looked around the room and upon the beautiful picture. The fire was burning down low, and the flame flashed up and down upon the opposite portrait, giving a convulsive emotion to the features, as of sobbing. I looked at the sorrowful, sobbing face with a feeling of deep pity, as though it had been the living sufferer that it seemed. There was such an indescribable look of life, love, anguish, on the beautiful features, I felt a dreamy, mysterious, but intense desire to wipe away the tears from that pictured face. It was a good while before I could get to sleep. That beautiful countenance, silently convulsed in the firelight, fascinated me. If I determinedly closed my eyes, they would fly open again, and fix upon the pictured sufferer. Nay, even when my eyes were closed, the lovely face was still present to

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my mind, and it seemed to me to be heartless to go to sleep with such an image of beauty, love, and sorrow before me. I was too imaginative. Well! the time, place, and circumstances made me so.

At last I fell asleep indeed; but through my dreams still slowly moved the image on the wall —beautiful, good, loving, suffering, as I felt her to have been; and with her moved another being—a perfect spectre, that might have been the consort of Death on the Pale Horse—an old, decrepit, livid hag, with a malign countenance and gibbering laugh, whose look chilled and whose touch frooze my blood with horror. Suddenly a noise, a fall, a smothered cry, awoke me, and, starting up in my bed, I saw in the red firelight, between the chimney and the side of my bed, the very hag of my dream, livid! malignant! gibbering! struggling violently against Wolfgang Wallraven, who, himself an embodied typhon, with a wild, angry blaze in his light-gray eyes, held her.

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CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

Unobserved by him, I, after the first involuntary start, had fallen back upon my pillow.

The conflict was too unequal to last above a minute. It was a deadly, silent struggle. He evidently wished to secure her without hurting her, or making the least noise. He quickly succeeded in mastering and bearing her out of the room.

Soon he came softly back. I was lying still; he evidently inferred that I was asleep; for, after throwing a quick, penetrating glance at me, and looking hurriedly around the chamber, he silently retired, cautiously closing the door after him.

You may judge that I slept no more that night. I scarcely knew with certainty at what point to separate my sinister dream from the mysterious reality; and doubts, and even anxious fears, agitated me. Who was that malign old hag? How came she in the dead hours of

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the night into my sleeping-room? What motive brought her there? How had Wolfgang known of her visit? Or, which had come first, and which had followed the other? Or, possibly, had they come together, and for what purpose? What meant that deadly struggle? What meant that look of agonized dread and terrible purpose upon the ghastly face of Wolfgang?—the look of unutterable hatred and determined malignity upon the fiendish features of the beldame?

I am no coward, but I say that I turned ice cold with terror, not so much at what might have happened to either of the mortal foes, as at the passion silently raging in the bosoms of both.

All was dark and still in my room now. The lurid, dull-red glow of the smoldering coals on the hearth revealed nothing. Even the image on the wall was invisible in the deeping shadows of that darkest hour that precedes the dawn of day. I lay in the misery of an energetic, acutely-anxious mind, fretting itself against forced inactivity of the body.

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At length the unknown sounds that usher in the earliest dawn of morning began to be heard.

I arose, drew on my dressing-gown, and taking some dry oak logs from a wood pile near the fireplace, threw them upon the smoldering coals, which soon kindled them into a cheerful and genial blaze. As, however, the room was yet too dusky, I went to the windows to open the shutters. I found some difficulty in hoisting the windows and in pushing open the shutters, for they were blocaded with snow and ice. When I did so, however, the frozen snow fell rattling down to the ground, and the sudden dazzling sunbeams, flashing in, nearly blinded me with light.

When I could look out, however, I saw that the dark and heavy clouds of the preceding day had not fallen in a deluge of rain as had been predicted, but during the still hours of the night had noiselessly descended in one of those tremendous falls of snow that furnish paragraphs for the marvelous department of the newspapers of the day, and make data in the

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history of a lifetime. All around stretched fields of frozen snow, the great depth of which might be partly guessed at by the tops of high gate-posts sticking a few inches above the surface, and marking the site of a buried line of fence—fields of crusted and sparkling snow, which flashed off in undulating radiance to the circle of mountains that shut in this white, cup-shaped dell, and whose icy peaks scintillated against the cold, blue horizon. This vast snow-cup, snow-pit, snow-dell, flashing, sparkling, scintillating, dazzling, glanced brighter in the reflected rays of the morning sun than the winter sky above.

It was certain that we were immured in this snow-glen, within the confines of these closely-circling and ice-cumbered mountains, for an indefinite number of days. There would be no fox hunting that day, or that week. That was evident; that I did not regret. Not life without, but life within the homestead absorbed my thoughts, and I turned from the flashing fields of snow and glancing peaks of ice to look upon the beautiful portrait on the wall that had so

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powerfully attracted me during the night. I wished to examine it, to test its powers of fascination by sober daylight. I turned and looked for it.

It was gone!

I gazed, doubting my own eyes. It was certainly gone. No sign of a picture ever having been there—no pin, screw, or nail, or even hole in the wall was to be seen! I looked all around in an almost ludicrous state of bewilderment.

I half suspected the whole train of sinister events of the past night to be merely the phantasmagoria of a midnight dream, or the creation of a morbidly-excited imagination, and I began to make my simple morning toilet.

I had not got half through, when a rap at the chamber door arrested my attention, and to my "Come in!" entered old John, who seemed to be factotum to the household, with hot water, towels, and offers of service. I gratefully accepted the hot water and the towels, and as gratefully declined his assistance at my dressing-table.

He then informed me that breakfast would

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be on the table in half an hour, and left the room.

A quarter of an hour afterward, having given the last and most graceful wave to my temple locks, in honor of my superb Queen of Egypt, I descended to the hall.

As I entered the old wainscoted apartment, heated, as upon the previous evening, by an immense fire of hickory wood, I saw Mr. Wallraven, Wolfgang, and old John, standing on the broad hearth in deep and earnest conversation. "Secured," "Keep her own room," were the broken words that fell upon my ear as I came in, when the trio suddenly separated at my approach, and Wolfgang came forward to meet me.

He was dreadfully pale and haggard. He appeared really very ill. After glancing at me furtively and keenly, he spoke to me very affectionately, saying something about regretting that the inclemency of the weather should oblige us to postpone our hunt.

I told him there was no fear but what we should be able to amuse ourselves for the few

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days during which the snow would confine us to the vale.

"And now, my dear Fairfield, trapping snow-birds and cracking hickory nuts—for that appears to be the only resource."

"Books, music, conversation, tales of olden times. Miss Walraven——"

"Ah!" began Wolfgang; but before he could proceed with his threatened sarcasm, old John appeared at the door and announced breakfast.

I followed Wolfgang into the next room; and there we found a good fire and a fine Virginia breakfast.

Mr. Wallraven was there, and, besides the servants, no one else. He invited us to be seated at the table, and we took our places. I was helped to coffee, buckwheat cakes, broiled partridge; but my attention was divided between the savory viands before me and the door at my right hand, through which I hoped and expected every instant to see my "wondrous Queen of Egypt" enter. I wished so much to see her by daylight. At length I could bear

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the suspense no longer; and, turning to Mr. Wallraven, I asked:

"Are we not to have the happiness of Miss Wallraven's presence at breakfast this morning?"

I was not answered immediately. I saw that both the old gentleman and Wolfgang changed color and exchanged glances, as Wolfgang replied, in a low tone of voice:

"My sister left home this morning for an absence of several weeks."

I bowed, as in politeness bound; but how Miss Wallraven could have left home through the avalanches and icebergs that blockaded us that morning was a mystery to me.

Without seeming to make any effort, both Mr. Wallraven and Wolfgang certainly exerted themselves to entertain me.

Thanks to their successful endeavors, the next week did not pass heavily, although we were confined almost entirely to the house and near grounds. A well-stored library, various musical instruments, backgammon, chess, cards, billiards, conversations with the old gen-

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tleman, who possessed a rich and highly-cultivated mind, a profound tone of thought, exalted sentiments, and a brilliant style of conversing; spars with the willful and fascinating Wolfgang, filled up the hours of the short days.

My growing friendship for the old gentleman deepened almost into love; my esteem for him at least amounted to veneration! So patriarchal, so reverend, seemed his tall figure, his snow-white hair, and his clerical black suit, so full of Christian love and benediction seemed his serious smile and his sweet, grave tones. My reverence for the venerable father greatly augmented my respect, if it could not increase my affection, for the son; but—the mystery! the mystery! What was it? My mind sometimes naturally connected the midnight apparition of Wolfgang and the malign hag at the bedchamber with the terrible secret of the family; and at other times I entertained a rational doubt as to whether the dread apparition were a dream or a reality. Since that first night my sleep had been undisturbed.

The end of that week brought Christmas

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eve, and also a considerable moderation of the cold and a thaw of the snow, though the condition of the ground still precluded the possibility of a pleasant hunt.

Christmas day we had a small party of gentlemen to dinner, and the long-talked-of hunt was appointed for the next week. After dinner, and when these men were about to take their leave, we were all invited to return the visits upon any day that we should fix, and I, as a stranger, was pressed to do so. I observed that Mr. Wallraven, with a strange blending of humility and pride, courteously declined these invitations. These gentlemen, I heard long afterward, were a company formed for some enterprise, and that they were trying to negotiate a loan of a very large sum of money from Mr. Wallraven—an arrangement they finally succeeded in completing, much to their satisfaction, however little it might have been to Mr. Wallraven's interest.

Sunday after Christmas Mr. Wallraven and myself attended divine service at the Episcopal church of St. Stephens.

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After the sermon, Mr. Wallraven lingered until all the congregation had left the church, and then came out of his pew to meet the young minister, who was coming down the aisle to speak to him. They met as intimate friends who had a great respect for each other. Mr. Wallraven introduced him as the Rev. Mr. Davenport, and then they entered into a conversation for a few minutes. At parting, Mr. Wallraven pressed the minister to come over and dine with him the next day, an invitation that he accepted.

The next day Mr. Davenport and his wife, who, by the way, was not included in the invitation extended to her husband, came over to Hickory Hall. Mr. Wallraven received the clergyman with grave cordiality, and his amiable wife with scarcely concealed surprise and emotion. When we were once seated around the great fire in the old wainscoted hall, Mr. Davenport inquired with much interest for "Constance."

"My daughter is from home for a few weeks," replied the old gentleman.

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Mr. Davenport expressed some regret at not being able to see her, and the conversation dropped, or rather changed. The day passed very pleasantly. The minister and Mr. Wallraven had a game of chess.

Mrs. Davenport—who was an amiable, intelligent, and interesting little lady—Wolfgang, and myself, played and sang trios, or two of us duets. We dined early, and early in the afternoon our visitors departed, having very reluctantly drawn from Mr. Wallraven a promise to dine with them on New Year's eve.

The next day, being Tuesday, was the day of our great hunt. Mr. Davenport, of course, did not join in it, from that irrational and very deleterious custom which debars ministers of the gospel from amusements considered lawful and beneficial to the lay members of their congregation, thus separating religion from innocent, cheerful, and healthful pleasure, greatly to the disparagement of the former.

The party of gentlemen assembled early in the morning, and the neighing and prancing of the hunters, and the cries of the hounds, made

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a gay and enlivening scene. We set out very early, and had a highly exciting hunt, and a rather fatiguing day. It was late in the afternoon before the brush was taken.

Wolfgang Wallraven took it.

We returned to a sumptuous dinner at Hickory Hall. After the dessert, the guests sat long over the wine, and it was late in the night before they separated and left the house.

We were later than usual at assembling to breakfast the next morning. After breakfast, we were reminded by a note from Mr. Davenport of our promise to dine at St. Stephens' parsonage and inviting us for the next day.

Mr. Wallraven, after some considerable hesitation and with evident reluctance, wrote to accept the invitation.

Accordingly, the next morning we set out for the parsonage, distant some nine miles, and where we arrived about eleven o'clock in the forenoon. We found the excellent clergyman and his wife friendly and hospitable as ever, but not so lively—struggling, in fact, to keep up a

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cheerfulness, which was evidently maintained by great effort.

The conversation, after some variety, turned upon church affairs, in the course of which Mr. Davenport inadvertently let escape him a hint that his congregation, especially his vestry, were much dissatisfied with him, and that his stay among them was now unpleasant as well as doubtful.

Then old Mr. Wallraven arose, and, laying his hand solemnly and affectionately upon the shoulder of the young clergyman, said, in a low voice:

"I have long feared this, my excellent young friend. I know too well their ground of objection. Come with me. I would talk with thee apart!" and, excusing himself, Mr. Davenport arose, and they walked slowly away in earnest conversation together.

I caught these words: "My dear, disinterested young friend, you must not injure yourself by your indiscreet attachment to me. Already one dear, Christian friend has fallen a victim to his love for me and mine. This must

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not go on. Let me alone. 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that let him reap.' Thirty years of suffering, that has whitened my hair like snow at fifty, has nevertheless accustomed me to my sorrow, and strengthened me to bear it. You must——"

The remainder of the speech died away, but at the distant bay window I still saw them in debate, the patriarchal old man, earnest, solemn, impressive; the tones and gestures of the young clergyman, energetic, denunciatory. I think that Mr. Wallraven convinced, at least, I know he silenced the minister; for, on returning to the fire, the old gentleman appeared satisfied, while Mr. Davenport seemed melancholy, and even, perhaps, remorseful.

When we left in the evening, no invitations were given on either side, and the parting itself was grave and sad.

Storm clouds were again mustering in the northwest, and we had a very brisk ride through the cold and darkening twilight, in order to escape, if possible, the storm of wind, snow, and sleet, that, nevertheless, when we were within

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half a mile of Hickory Hall, broke out upon us in boisterous fury. We reached the homestead at last, where the severity of the weather confined us for a week. After it moderated we had an occasional guest at dinner, but went out visiting no more during our short stay.

Our time was passed, however, more agreeably than before. We were blessed with one of those clear, mild, and dry spells of weather, which sometimes visits us even in the dead of winter. We passed the remainder of our time, in the mornings, in sporting expeditions upon the mountains and in the forests, from which we would return laden with game; in exploring expeditions among the wild and picturesque or awful and majestic scenery of the Blue Ridge, or in sails upon the Shenandoah; and in the evenings in games of various kinds, in music, books or conversation.

We had another great hunt upon the last day of our stay, and the next morning we left Hickory Hall for the North.

I need not say that during my stay, throughout all the external circumstances of my visit,

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my thoughts and feelings were intensely interested in the sinister mystery that enveloped the unfortunate Wallravens, which nothing tended to elucidate, while everything helped to deepen.

It is not to be supposed that all I had read and heard at Hickory Hall had not greatly increased my anxiety upon my sister's account. Another cause for uneasiness I had also. During my residence at Hickory Hall, and, in fact, from the time of my having written to Regina of my proposed visit to Virginia, I had not once heard from her. Notwithstanding I had written two or three letters, I had received no answer. I fancied this proceeded from a feeling of resentment, on her part, upon account of my visit; but I also feared that she might be ill or unhappy.

Upon reaching the university, however, I found one letter from her, bearing a recent date, awaiting me. She was well, had got all my letters, hoped I had enjoyed my visit to Virginia, coldly regretted that she had not had the pleasure of my society and that of my friend, Mr. Wallraven, at Christmas, but hoped

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to be compensated at the end of the ensuing term. That was the first time she had ever mentioned Wolfgang in any of her letters to me. I felt that she did so now only for the purpose of drawing me out. I felt it my duty to enlighten her as much as I was able, which you may judge was not much. I sat down and wrote her a long, long letter, filling six foolscap pages, and giving her a detailed account of all that had happened since my leave-taking of her —I mean literally all events in which Wolfgang was concerned. I folded and sealed this letter, and, after leaving it in my desk all night, took it out, and—consigned it to the flames! By a piece of opinion and feeling, irrational and erratic as any of Wolfgang's own, it appeared to me the work of a spy to go into his domestic circle and expose all that I saw there to the worst construction, and that, too, to the woman he loved and esteemed above all others in the world. At least I determined to think again before I did this, and resolved never to do it unless circumstances strictly demanded it—unless, in fact, he should renew his suit to my sis-

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ter, in the way of which I proposed to throw every sort of obstruction. I formed a resolution never again to go to Hickory Hall, and never again to invite Wallraven to Willow Hill. Do not suppose that I could determine upon this course without deep grief, for I dearly loved Wolfgang; and this very resolution, growing out of a sense of duty as it did, now served to deepen, as well as sadden, my affection for the strange fellow.

The current term was to be our last at the university. During the whole of this term Wallraven applied himself to study with unparalleled industry. It was predicted that he would take a very high degree, and, when the end of the term came, this prediction was fulfilled in his highest success. He received marks of esteem from the most distinguished of the professors, and the warm congratulations of his companions. This eminent success had astonished even those who predicted great things for him, and, I think, surprised Wallraven himself, and, with honor of the distinguished, and the sympathy among the warm-

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hearted among his associates, combined to warm his stiff, cold, reserved nature.

Never had I seen him so nearly happy. He invited me to go with him to Hickory Hall, where he said he should spend some months previous to going abroad. I declined. Then he gave me every opportunity of returning the civility, which I omitted to do. I do not know how long my resolution would have held out; for his eminent success, the honor paid him, and, more than all, his own happy, elated mood, were conspiring to bring about a hopeful change in my sentiments, had not a circumstance occurred to put all choice out of the question—an event that decided for time, perhaps for all eternity, the fate of my ill-starred sister, and overwhelmed my life with sorrow. I had not heard from Regina for a month, and was beginning to feel uneasy. I grew anxious for the day when I should set out on my journey homeward to meet her again.

Upon leaving the university at the end of the term, Wallraven and myself had taken up our abode temporarily at a hotel, where we were

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mutually engaged in preparations for our respective journeys, and where I was turning over in my mind the question of inviting or not inviting Wolfgang to Willow Hill.

It was the third day of our sojourn there, that Wallraven and myself were sitting together in a parlor that we occupied jointly, when, without any premonition whatever, the door was gently thrown open by a waiter, who announced Miss Fairfield; and, to my extreme astonishment, my sister Regina, weary and travel-stained, but fair and proud as ever, advanced into the room!

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CHAPTER VII.

THE LOST PATRIMONY.

"Thou may'st not enter thy fair mansion house,
Thou may'st not pull a sapling from thy hills,
Thou may'st not set thy foot within the fields."
—HOWITT.

"Regina! my dear sister! I am delighted and astounded to see you! Whence come you? How come you? But here! before you reply, take this easy chair, and—give me your bonnet! Place your feet upon this footstool! You look weary! You rode all night! Who escorted you? Nay, do not answer! You look so exhausted! Have a glass of water first, or —a cup of coffee? Wolfgang, my dear fellow! —but no! I will run!"

It was something like this tirade of ejaculations of astonishment, joy, love, and solicitude that I received my sister, placed her in the lounging-chair, set a cushion under her feet, and ran off to order refreshments.

I was absent some fifteen minutes; and when I returned, followed by a waiter bringing in

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toffee, etc., and a chambermaid to take Miss Fairfield's wraps and receive her orders, I found Wolfgang standing by Regina's side, stooping over her with a countenance beaming with happiness, his left arm caressingly encircling her shoulders, his right hand clasping hers, and she no longer pale and weary, but blushing with pride and pleasure, as her radiant eyes were veiled beneath his ardent gaze. He drew off as we entered, and each resumed composure. Regina arose with her accustomed stately self-possession, and, attended by the chambermaid, retired from the room to refresh herself by a change of dress, saying to me, *en passant*, that I might countermand the order for refreshments, and, if we had not already breakfasted, she would join us at that meal. I said that we had not, and she left us.

Breakfast for three was served in our parlor, and in half an hour Regina entered, every vestige of fatigue and discomposure fled from her countenance and bearing, and she, attired in a plain but rich morning dress of India muslin, looking beautiful and gracious as ever.

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During breakfast I made no inquiries concerning the motive of her extraordinary journey at this particular time, when she knew I was so soon to return home. I rightly conjectured that she had a somewhat lengthy explanation to make; besides which, the waiter was in attendance, and we could have no confidential conversation in the presence of a servant.

When our meal was over, however, and when the waiter had removed the breakfast service, set the room in order, and retired, Regina seated herself in the easy-chair, placed her feet upon the footstool, summoned Wallraven and myself to her side, and, in a calm voice, and with a composed manner, informed us that our agent, using the great power intrusted to him, had converted all our property into cash, and fled with it to the West Indies! That, too, just when in a few weeks he knew he would be called upon to deliver up his trust. By this piece of unparalleled rascality we were left—no, not "beggars," nor "penniless," quite. We might have between us in pocket money, jew-

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elry, and personal appointments, some five or six thousand dollars—that was all.

At first I was too completely stunned by the news—not of our great loss, but of our attorney's great villainy—to feel the real sharpness of our misfortune.

I turned in despair and looked at Wallraven. How would he receive the news of his friends' calamity? When I first turned my eyes full upon him, as it were, by surprise, he looked positively aflame with joy! I had never seen any exhibition of triumph like that in him before. What did he mean? Before I had time to ask, his obstreperousness was reigned in, and his features forced into an expression of gravity.

Regina further informed me that she had availed herself of the opportunity afforded by the journey of the Right Rev. Bishop L——, who was traveling north to the convention, to join me; that she had written to warn me of her approach—a letter which, by the way, I had never received.

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Miss Fairfield then excused herself, and left us to seek needful repose.

As soon as she had gone, Wolfgang, who had, with difficulty, restrained his excitement all this time, impetuously threw himself down beside me, and, clasping me as if I had been his sweetheart, exclaimed, vehemently:

"My brother! my heart! command my utmost powers and resources—command me! Half of my father's wealth is mine when I demand it; it is yours when you want it!"

"Thank you, thank you, thank you. I am not overwhelmed by this misfortune, dear Wolfgang, though I am in danger of being so by your whole-hearted goodness."

"And you will let me serve you?"

"Not to the fanatical extent, or in the manner that you propose, my dear Wallraven. You are excited by this news even more than I am. My dear, generous fellow, be quiet. As you perceive, neither my sister nor myself is driven mad by this misfortune. I shall execute now a plan that I have often thought of, even in my days of independence, and in doing so, en-

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ter a line of life for which I have at times had a strong inclination."

"And what is that?"

"The Christian ministry! I shall immediately curtail every unnecessary expense, reduce my living expense, reduce myself to the severest economy, convert all my personal effects that can possibly be dispensed with into cash, and commence a course of theological reading."

"Fairfield, you constrain my admiration! Have you, then, no painful regrets for the past —no gnawing anxiety for the future?"

"None for myself."

"You astonish me!"

"But——"

"Well?"

"For another——"

"Well? 'For another'—for whom, Fairfield? Have you been falling in love? Though that could scarcely happen without my knowledge, as we have been so inseperable—but yet, is it so?"

"No, I have not fallen in love. Of course,

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you know that; and you should know also that I speak of my sister!" said I, seriously.

"Your sister!" he exclaimed, in what I thought a very natural surprise. "Your sister!"

"Certainly—my sister."

"And why, pray?"

"Is it so strange that I should feel anxiety for the future of Regina after this serious reverse?"

"No, certainly not—assuredly not! Excuse me! I—my thoughts fly occasionally, and I spoke, perhaps, rather in reference to my own phase of mind, and from my own point of view, than from yours. Go on, dear Fairfield! Believe me, though my thoughts fly, they only circle round and round you and your interest, my brother. Go on, I pray you! Tell me all your cause for anxiety."

"Regina, then. I could very well support my sister in a small way; or, at moderate outlay, I could establish her at the head of a new female academy—but——"

"Well, my dear friend?"

"Her haughtines of heart unfits her for de-

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pendence upon me, or servitude of others. This lofty pride troubles me the more that I have no sort of sympathy with it—cannot understand it fully; and, as far as I do, utterly condemn it. Human pride is folly, or insanity. The Saviour of the world——"

"Come, Ferdinand, my reverend friend, don't anticipate the privilege of the vestments! For myself, I adore the 'lofty pride' of Miss Fairfield. It is indissolubly entwined with the most exalted virtues, which could not exist without it!"

"You speak like a lover!"

"I speak the truth. Her 'lofty pride' sustains the highest sentiments of truth, courage, generosity, fortitude!"

"I have never seen her 'fortitude' tested yet. It is that which I dread."

"You 'have never seen her fortitude tested!' not even in this sudden and severe reverse of fortune?"

"No, only her c ..rage is tested here. She met, but has not ..t borne, the evils of this misfortune. Cour ..e only meets calamity bravely

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it takes fortitude to endure it strongly and patiently. Courage dares misfortune—fortitude sustains it; courage——"

"Courage is acute fortitude, and fortitude is chronic courage, you mean, medically speaking!"

"Fudge!"

"Certainly! I beg your pardon, Fairfield, for cutting short, both your sermon on pride, and your ethical and metaphysical essay on courage and fortitude, because the former was ill-timed, the latter essentially unphilosophical, and both would have run to I know not what length. Now, then, let us return to the more attractive subject of Miss Fairfield. You were saying——"

"I was saying that I have no sympathy with my sister's pride. I do not understand it, and it troubles me for her future."

"And I repeat most emphatically that I adore that pride!"

"You are an enthusiast."

"I worship that pride—that lofty spirit, which is not assumption, nor arrogance, but a

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calm, majestic, unconscious assertion of her own inestimable worth; of her own essential, unalienable worth; of her own essential, unalienable royalty; the triune royalty of transcendent beauty, goodness, and genius!"

"Oh, you are mad!"

"'Honor to whom honor is due!'"

"Yes, but that is not to be haughty. He who spake these words, said also: 'The humble shall be exalted, and the proud shall be brought low;' 'He that exalteth himself shall be abased;' and 'The meek shall inherit the earth;' 'Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty temper before destruction.' You doubtless will give me more contempt for what you will consider weakness, than credit for the fear of God; but I confess that these things trouble me for my dearest sister. It seems to me that her severe discipline has already begun. I do hope——"

"Pshaw! hush! Nonsense! Don't preach! You're not in the holy orders yet!" exclaimed Wolfgang, interrupting me, in a husky voice and with an agitated manner.

I looked at him in surprise.

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He shuddered twice or thrice in his old way, got up and walked to the window, and said:

"It seems to me you are croaking this evening, Fairfield, to say nothing of a very unbrotherly severity to a trait of character in your only sister, which I for one cannot consider a fault, but must look upon with high respect, even when——"

He stopped abruptly.

"When carried to excess?"

"Yes, something of that sort," he said, with an involuntary writhe of his beautiful lips.

A twinge of remorse wrung me for an instant. I felt that I had been severe with the foible of my dear Regina, and that it was not only ungenerous, but unjust, to speak of her fault in her absence; so I hastened to say:

"You know that I have no fraternal insensibility to my sister's noble character, Wolfgang!"

"Ah, you have! You do not see, do not acknowledge that it is pride that keeps that high, pure character so spotless from even conventional little meannesses."

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"Yes, I do; but I see also that 'pride' makes Regina sternly uncompromising, terribly intolerant of the little social and conventional meannesses and falsehoods of others."

The effect of my words upon him was as fearful as unexpected. He blanched suddenly, dropped into a chair, and glared luridly from under the shade of his long, black lashes at me, as if I had willfully and wantonly outraged him.

I was about done with surprise at any eccentric motion of Wallraven; and fate, or something, impelled me to go on. "What is neither always reasonable nor Christian, her high-toned sense of honor is morbid, even to mania. Deception, no matter how well, how logically defended, finds no tolerance with her. It would disgust her in a mere acquaintance; it would alienate her forever from a friend; and in one she loved pre-eminently, it would kill or madden her. I know and feel it. It is this that has terrified me for my sister. It is this that makes me shudder when I recall the fearful words, 'Pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty temper before destruction!'" I suddenly felt a

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strong grasp upon my shoulder, and the husky, inaudible words:

"For God's sake, hush!" and Wallraven rushed out of the room.

"I have something to say to you, dear Ferdinand," said my sister Regina, laying her fair hand affectionately on my shoulder, and sinking softly into a chair by my side.

She looked so fair, so proud, so joyous, yet—so charmingly embarrassed.

"Why, how beautiful you are, Regina! Queen Blanche! Fair one with golden locks!" exclaimed I, in involuntary admiration and fondness. And she was!—dazzlingly beautiful! She had arisen, restored by her long morning sleep, refreshed by her cold bath, and dressed for dinner. She wore a very light blue silk, with fine lace falls to the short sleeves, and low corsage. Her splendid, pale-gold hair was rolled back from her snowy forehead and temples in shining bandeaus, and woven in a large knot behind. She had floated in and sunk down by me softly, lightly, gracefully, as a sun-gilded azure cloud, a vision of celestial beauty!

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"I have something to say to you, dear Ferdinand," she repeated, without deigning to notice by admiration.

"I listen, dear Regina," said I, seriously.

"Brother, I am engaged to be married to Wolfgang Wallraven."

I started to my feet, throwing off her hand by my violence, and exclaiming, vehemently:

"No!"

"Are you surprised?" she serenely inquired.

"No, Regina! No!" I exclaimed, emphatically, without replying to her last observation.

"Yes, then, if I must repeat my last declaration."

"No, it is not! It must not! It shall not be so."

"Why?" she asked, calmly, with scarcely a perceptible inflection of surprise and contempt in her tone.

"You must not—shall not—cannot marry Wallraven!"

"Will you endeavor to make yourself intelligible, Ferdinand?" she demanded, coldly.

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"Wallraven cannot in honor marry you, and he knows it!"

Her snowy brow grew purple; she drew her proud chest haughtily up, and was preparing silently to leave the room, when I laid my hand upon her with an imploring gesture, and, rising, went and turned the key in the door, sat down by her side, and beseeching her by our fraternal love to listen to me with some little toleration, I began, and gave her a minute, detailed account of my whole confidential connection with Wallraven, commencing from our earliest school days, passing through our life at the preparatory school, through our college friendship, including our joint visit to Willow Hill, with the extraordinary scene in his chamber; and, lastly, my recent visit to Hickory Hall, with the frightful occurrence in my chamber in the dead of the first night of my arrival. I ended with imploring my sister, as she valued her happiness, not to risk it by a marriage with him. For any other good purpose than that of doing my own duty and exonerating my own

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conscience, I might just as well have been silent.

Regina heard me through, though, as my story progressed, I saw her lip curl, and curl, with a slowly-gathering contempt; and when I finished, she arose with flashing eyes, and answered me with a blasting, consuming scorn, anger, and defiance, accusing me of degrading suspicions—degrading to myself and no one else—of treachery to my friend—of—of I know not what besides; and expressing, with an air of an empress, her highest trust in Wolfgang Wallraven's unimpeachable purity and honor. In short, she replied to me as any other haughty, high-spirited woman would reply to aspersions so cast upon the man she deigned to accept.

I attempted a rejoinder, but resuming her sovereign self-possession, with a gesture full of high command, she silently indicated her will to leave the room, and I went to the door, unlocked and held it open while she swept majestically through.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE BRIDE'S DOWRY.

I felt myself relieved of a most disagreeable duty, which had been pressing upon me for some time, though certainly placed in a very unpleasant position. Loving Wolfgang and Regina almost with equal affection, and loving none others in the world but them, I wished their happiness above all things. Could their union have seemed likely to secure their felicity, I should have desired it more than any other event. But, from all I had seen and heard, I feared that it would end in misery to both; therefore I sought to serve them best by attempting to break it off, and I had attained no better end than to deeply offend both my friend and sister. One lesson I learned, that it is useless and absurd to interfere between lovers who really love each other. I determined, however, to tell Wolfgang all I had said to Regina. I could not conceal this from him, for I could

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not have anything approximating toward a treachery upon my conscience.

The dinner-bell rang in the midst of my painful cogitations, and mechanically, as a matter of habit, I sauntered down into the dining-room, and took my seat at the table.

Soon the door opened, and Wallraven entered with Regina on his arm, and they took their places, which were first and second above mine, Regina sitting between me and Wolfgang.

By nothing on Regina's fair, frosty brow, or in her usually calm, cold manner, could I perceive whether she were still angry with me.

Wolfgang looked black as the muzzle of a loaded cannon; but whether with anger, gloom, or both, I could not tell.

After dinner, a pair of horses were brought around, and Wallraven invited Regina to ride, to which she assented, and I was left to my unpleasant company and thoughts for the rest of the afternoon.

Very late in the afternoon they returned. Regina went to her chamber to change her rid-

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ing habit, and Wallraven came into our parlor, where I was still sitting. He rang the bell, and, throwing his whip, cap, gloves, etc., to the waiter, who entered, directed him to bring wine. I approached him.

"Wallraven!"

"Well?"

"I have something offensive to say to you!"

"Out with it, man!"

"You will be angry!"

"If I am, I shall knock you down first, and forgive you afterward."

"That will be Christian, but dangerous. You are engaged to my sister?"

"How do you know that?"

"She told me."

"Well, what then? You told me to win her if I could."

"Yes; but——"

"Well?"

"Circumstances have transpired since then——"

"You made no allowance for circumstances."

"I was wrong—hasty—very indiscreet!"

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"Ah! well! circumstances have transpired! To what 'circumstances' do you allude!"

"Among other things, the events of a night at Hickory Hall!"

Wallraven grew very pale, but commanded himself.

"Will you relate to me those events?" he asked, in a constrained voice.

"Certainly," replied I, and detailed to him the occurrences of my first night at Hickory Hall. To my surprise he looked infinitely relieved, though the laugh was unnatural with which he said:

"You cannot believe it possible that the turtle soup and deviled partridges gave you a horrible nightmare, can you?"

"No, truly, I cannot. What I saw was real."

"Fairfield, when next you visit Hickory Hall, look into the library, and on the third shelf in the second arch on the right hand of the chimney-piece, you will find Sir Walter Scott's complete works. Select from among them his volume on 'Demonology,' and read it with atten-

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tion. I think it will do you good," said he, with a calm, deliberate manner.

"What I was about to say to you, Wolfgang, was this: I felt it to be my duty to my sister to inform her of all I know of your history, as well as to hint to her all I suspect!" And I looked, expecting him to explode. He was quiet as a bombshell untouched.

"Ah! you told her?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well, Wallraven, I implored her, as she valued her happiness, not to risk it by marrying you. I used every argument and entreaty in my power to enforce or persuade her to break with you——"

"And the result——"

"Was utterly unsuccessful."

"No more than that?"

"Yes; much more. I was totally defeated, routed, blasted by the lightning of her angry scorn, and I wonder that a bit of me is left to tell the tale!"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha! I knew it!"

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"I said everything I could say to your injury, Wolfgang, and, having done so, I come to tell you of it—not in defiance—but in frankness."

"God bless you, Fairfield! there! I believe this is the first time in all my life, at least since my angel mother went to heaven, that I have prayed; but happy love makes one grateful and devout. God bless you, Fairfield, for you were true to your sister, to my bride! my idolized Regina! You were right to tell her all you know, which was—nothing; and all you suspect, which was—something less! But, Fairfield, my dear fellow, having made up my own mind to marry her, it is quite settled! Let your conscience rest, for you cannot help it! What is your eloquence to mine, when I love her? What is the power of all men and devils over her, compared with mine, when she loves me? It is settled. All earth and hell could not part us now! It is settled. I wrote to my father this noon. I shall take my wife to Paris immediately after our marriage. I intend to make our home there for many, many years—perhaps forever! France is really the only civ-

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ilized country in this barbarous world! Paris, only, is really enlightened! or, beginning to be. Yes! Paris shall be our home. Go with us, Fairfield, will you not?"

"No! to that modern Sodom I will never go. You, Wallraven, if I know you, will never like a place where the sanctity of home and hearth is unknown! You will be only, at best, a refugee in Paris—from what I suppose—nay, I hope—I may never know."

"Yes, you will know, some day, when I can tell you my humiliating secret proudly! Then you shall know!"

"God grant that you may be able to do so, Wolfgang, my brother!"

Regina at this moment entered the room, every sign of displeasure vanished from her radiant brow.

I made no further opposition. I crushed down in the bottom of my heart my foreboding fears, and tried to hope. Now that it was useless to look on the dark side, I turned resolutely to the bright one, which was really very bright. Wolfgang—young, handsome, tal-

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ented, accomplished and wealthy—the distinguished graduate of the university, now radiant with the glory of his recent collegiate honors, adoring my sister and adored by her. Yes! I would look only on this side of the picture, where all was brilliant!

The next day we received a visit from Bishop L——, under whose care Regina had traveled North. He condoled with us upon our misfortune when he came, but congratulated us upon our firmness and gayety when he went away.

I promised to return his call; and, accordingly, upon the second day I did so, and took that opportunity of informing him of my sister's contemplated marriage with Wolfgang Wallraven, and of unfolding to him my desire to enter a course of theological reading for the purpose of taking holy orders. I told him how long this had been on my mind; how long, even, before I dreamed of a possible loss of fortune.

He highly approved my design, and placed his library at my service, inviting me at the same time to return with him to the South, and take up my abode for the present at his house.

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There were many reasons why I should feel no scruple in accepting the assistance of the venerable old man. He had in his youth been indebted to my grandfather for his own education, and subsequent establishment in the church in which he had risen to such high honor. Now, in his age, he had wealth, a a large house, an extensive library, and but a small family, consisting of his wife, one son and a daughter. He seemed very anxious to assist me, and soon overruled my faint objections.

I told him, however, that it would be impossible for me to return with him, or go South at all, until after my sister's marriage, when I promised to do so.

When I returned I found that Wallraven and Regina had walked out together. They did not return until the dinner hour.

I pass over two weeks, the mornings of which were spent in walking, or driving out, or reading, music, or conversation at home; and the evenings, in attending lectures and concerts abroad, or in some social pastime in our own parlor.

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Regina was proudly, though bashfully, joyous.

Wallraven exhibited a haughty and happy self-consciousness that became him greatly. Every day his step was more stately and elastic, his eye more steady and commanding. The regnant spirit was assuredly triumphant now!

At the end of two weeks, early one morning, he entered my chamber and laid before me two papers, indicating the one that I should read first.

That was a letter from his father, Mr. Wallraven, giving consent to his marriage, and filled with affectionate expressions of regard for his bride and earnest prayers for the happiness of both, regretting that his infirmities must prevent his traveling North to be present at their marriage, and pressing Wolfgang to bring his wife to Hickory Hall immediately after the ceremony. His letter ended with a message of affection and esteem for myself, a fervent tender of service, and an invitation to accompany my sister and her husband to Virginia. The letter was like the old gentleman

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himself, full of delicate beneficence, exalted love and magnanimity, yet through all betraying an undertone of sadness, solemnity, almost gloom. I was deeply affected on reading it.

Wolfgang slipped it from my hand, and placed the other paper before me.

This was the attested copy of a deed settling one hundred thousand dollars on Regina Fairfield. I read this twice, or thrice, before I looked up to see Wallraven leaning over my chair with an expression of generous satisfaction.

"Why, what is the meaning of this, Wallraven?" inquired I, with the feeling and the tone of embarassment.

"It means to express my own and my father's deep sense of the high honor Miss Fairfield confers upon us in bestowing her hand on me!" he replied, in a sad, earnest, and somewhat bitter tone.

"But this is wrong, utterly wrong, Wallraven. Regina's whole fortune now does not amount to more than three thousand dollars—a sum scarcely sufficient to provide the *trous-*

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seu of a Wallraven bride. If you will have her, in the name of Heaven take her; but do not think of giving so much where nothing is given in return."

"She gives me her priceless self," he answered, almost mournfully; then, after a short pause, added: "I am glad that it is so. I am glad that she is dowerless. I would confer everything upon my bride; receive nothing from her but her love, and still be her debtor, and still tremble for—— Oh, God!" he ejaculated, abruptly pausing.

"Regina herself, for the reason that she brings you no property, will object to receiving this munificent settlement."

"She must not! It is the time-honored custom of our family. It has always been the rule of the Wallravens to settle that dower upon the lady whom their heir should select as a bride, and who should respond to his love. Her fastidiousness must make her no exception to this rule. Indeed, her refined delicacy and pure, high pride will prevent her seeing the matter as you do. She will not for a moment degrade

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her sentiments by mixing them up with these subjects!"

It was thus that the wayward and erring, but generous, fellow ever deified even the greatest faults of his betrothed. I felt, when he spoke, that, with all his eccentricities, he was so much better than Regina as to be utterly blind to one thing which was quite apparent to me: namely, that as some diseases infect the whole physical system, so pride pervaded the whole mental and moral being of Regina Fairfield. Pride was the life of her love for Wallraven. Had not Wolfgang Wallraven been the eldest son and heir of an ancient and immensely wealthy Virginia family, living in her own old ancestral neighborhood—had he not been singularly handsome in person, graceful and dignified in manners, brilliant and profound in conversation, and endowed with genius that gave promise of an illustrious career—he never could have made so deep an impression upon Regina Fairfield's imagination and heart.

While seeing this, I saw in every glance, tone, and gesture of Wolfgang, that he must

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have worshiped her under any circumstances. How passionately fond he was of her! How entirely devoted to her service! How patient —he, the willful, haughty, sarcastic Wolfgang —how patient of her arrogance, her cold exactions! It always seemed to me that my beloved Regina walked in the moral illusion in which she had been brought up, as if the world had been created for her use and the people for her service. She accepted the most arduous and unremitting, and even the munificent marriage settlement, with such real and sovereign *nonchalance*, as such a mere matter of course, deserving neither acknowledgment, gratitude nor remembrance. And this regal indifference, which would have grieved me deeply, had I been in Wallraven's place, never affected him in the least.

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CHAPTER IX.

THE VICTIM BRIDE.

"A dream is on my soul!
I see a slumberer crowned with flowers, and smiling
As in delighted visions, on the brink
Of a dread chasm!"—HEMAN'S VESPERS OF PALERMO.

Their marriage day was at length fixed for the next Thursday fortnight. Bishop L—— was to perform the ceremony, immediately after which we were to set out for Hickory Hall.

Wallraven had intended to go immediately to Paris, but Regina had expressed her will that they should, according to the wish of the old gentleman and the time-honored custom of Virginia, spend the honeymoon in retirement, at the patrimonial house of the bridegroom, Hickory Hall.

Wallraven hesitated, looked disturbed, made —I know not what sort of excuse for opposing this plan.

Regina good-humoredly persisted in her purpose.

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Wallraven expostulated seriously.

Regina was charmingly immovable.

For the first time in their lives, Wallraven decidedly vetoed her will, and gave it his final determination, for reasons of the utmost moment, to proceed to Paris. Wolfgang gave this decision in a firm, grave, though affectionate tone; but Regina became extremely offended. Finally Wallraven bowed his will to hers, and retired to his chamber with a gloomy brow, to write and accept his father's invitation, and prepare them to receive us.

Wolfgang remained in his room all the forenoon; and so, when I wished to speak to him —thinking that he had surely long since finished his letter—I went to his door, and, according to our usual familiar and unceremonious habit with each other, without rapping, entered his room.

He was so closely engaged in writing—so absorbed, in fact—that he did not perceive my entrance until I had approached the side of his chair, and had involuntarily seen that he had reached the fifth page of a foolscap letter.

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I spoke to him.

He started, thrust the letter into his writing-desk, and turned around. He looked paler, more gloomy, than I had seen him look for six months or more.

He told me that, in consequence of the change of plan by which we were to go to Hickory Hall, instead of abroad, he had written, among other things, for his sister Constantia to come on and be present at his marriage, inquiring of me, with much interest, how I supposed Miss Fairfield would like Constantia.

I told him what I thought, namely—that Regina could not fail to admire and love Miss Wallraven.

He seemed pleased, and then I reminded him of an engagement he had made to ride with me that afternoon. He smiled mournfully—said that it had escaped his memory, but that he would soon be ready.

From this time it was evident that Wallraven's cheerfulness was gone. He had apparently purchased peace with his bride at a very dear and dangerous rate. His gloom deep-

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ened day by day, or was varied only by fitful flashes of false gayety, or spasms of sharp anxiety. These evil symptoms, however, were never betrayed except in the absence of Regina. In her presence he would always resolutely command himself, and act a gay tranquillity which was far from his real state of feeling. I do not know whether Regina penetrated his mask or not. If so, she never permitted me to see that she did.

She was certainly very much pleased with the prospect of going to Hickory Hall, and of having Constantia Wallraven for a bridesmaid and a traveling companion. Smiling, she said to me one day:

"Do you know, Ferdinand, what makes me so wicked about this matter of going to Hickory Hall? It is to see that fine old Virginia gentleman, whom I shall love as a father, and whose love I wish to win. I cannot bear the idea of going to France without even setting eyes upon him whom I love to regard as a second father. I do not care if the old Hall is tumbling down! There is a certain prestige of

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old respectability about that dilapidated building which does not always surround a smart-looking new tenement, however large and costly."

Then turning to Wallraven, she said:

"Such an absurd mistake of your highness, my Prince of Darkness! that of supposing that I should be shocked at the worn appearance of the old house!"

The day previous to her wedding day she came into my room. Smiling and sinking softly in a chair at my side, she said:

"Oh! Ferdinand, I am so well pleased. Wolfgang has a letter from his father, and now it is certain that Miss Wallraven will be with us this evening, and attended by—whom do you suppose! her twin brother, Constant, Wolfgang's younger brother. You never told me of him!"

"I knew nothing about him! What a queer, silent fellow your *parti* is, Regina! I wonder how many other brothers and sisters, aunts, uncles and cousins are to turn up."

"Oh, none! This Constant, who is a year

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younger than Wolfgang, has been for twelve months traveling in Europe, and has recently returned."

"Ah! and they come this evening?"

"Yes! Ah, Ferdinand! I shall have a sister. I do not care for Constant much. I do not care for the brother I shall gain, for I have already one dear brother; but I care very much for the father and the sister I shall have. I have been lonely, Ferdinand. I have borne within my bosom a cold heart, because I have had no mother or sister to keep it warm. For some reason or other, I never formed a female friendship in my life. I never could bring myself to make advances to other young ladies, and something within me repelled others from making advances to me. I have, with all my independence, needed that sisterly relation. Generally, I have been cold and strong enough; yet sometimes I have felt myself suddenly droop, with an utter weakness, for the want of some gentle woman friend whom I could love, whom I could trust. Now, in the failure of a sister of my own, my husband's sister will be-

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come inexpressibly dear to me; at least, I feel as if it would be so. I think it will be her own fault if it not so."

I wondered to hear Regina speak so. It was the first glimpse, with one exception, that I had ever had of the heart within her cold bosom. Yes, I wondered, until I remembered that under the snow of earliest spring the grain still germinates unseen in the warm and genial soil.

That evening, according to appointment, Mr. and Miss Wallraven arrived.

In the bustle of their arrivel, I had little opportunity of making observations.

After supper, however, when we were all—the three Wallravens, Regina and myself—assembled in our parlor, I had every facility for studying my prospective relatives.

First, I saw that Regina was more than satisfied with the new brother and sister.

Constant Wallraven was nearly the *fac simile* of Wolfgang—the same tall, slight, elegant figure, the same haughty set of the head, the same light-gray, blazing eyes, the same wilderness of

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slightly curling, silky, black hair, jet-black eyebrows, and long, black lashes. But he looked stronger, older, and more settled than Wolfgang. He looked as if at some time, not far distant in the past, he had been just such a chaotic assemblage of discordant elements as Wolfgang now was; and as if some mighty power had forcibly subdued the chaos, bringing out of it a world of harmony, beauty and strength. Withal, there was an expression of frankness, good-humor, and health of mind and body in his handsome face, which testified that the transforming power, whatever it had been, had not crushed but disciplined him. Only by the perfect repose, perfect harmony of these antipathetic elements of character betrayed in his features and complexion, could one judge of the pre-existence of a disciplining experience. One saw in him now a man who, though still quite young, had gained the great victory of his life; whose manner of existence and work was henceforth defined, laid out, and well understood.

I felt instinctively a high respect for, and a

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strong attraction to Constant Wallraven, as to a soul more exalted than my own.

Constantia was the same dark, majestic, superbly-beautiful woman I had seen her by night at Hickory Hall. I do not know that my artist taste was ever so highly gratified as by comparing these two young girls, Constantia and Regina, both so perfectly beautiful, yet so opposite in their forms, features, and complexions; yes, and style—though both were of the queenly order. Constantia's was a natural dignity; Regina's a conventional stateliness. Upon the whole, we were all pleased with each other, and it was on the stroke of twelve before we parted for the night.

Once or twice I had observed an unwonted thoughtfulness upon the usually clear, open countenance of my sister; but that was so natural under the circumstances, that it made no impression on my mind. When I had retired to my room, however, and before I had time to begin to take off my dress, I heard a tap at my door, and, thinking that it was of course Wolfgang, I bade him come in. The door opened,

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and my sister entered, and sank softly down in her usual seat, near my dressing-table. I looked at her inquiringly, anxiously. The stately gayety which had distinguished her all the afternoon and evening had quite gone, and the thoughtfulness that had once or twice, cloudlike, flitted past the sunshiny snow of her countenance, was now settled into a profound gloom.

"My dear Regina, you look so grave! but then this is a serious time for you!"

To my astonishment, she burst into tears, and dropped her head upon my dressing-table.

"Regina, my dear sister, what is this? Tell me?" But she sobbed on.

"Regina, you alarm and distress me! What is this?"

But she sobbed on, and I sat down by her side, took her hand and pressed it, while I waited silently for her to tell me the subject of her grief. When her fit of weeping had expended itself, she lifted up her head, dried her eyes, and, after remaining silent and still for a little while, she said:

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"You think me now sentimental, maudlin, sickening. I feel that you do. I am not that. I never was so. You ought to know it."

"I do know it, my dearest sister; and sentimentality is the last fault I should suspect you of. I know that you are strong, cool, and spirited—therefore I have been the more surprised and distresed at your tears this night. I know that it is natural—nay, generally inevitable—that a girl should drop some—not very bitter—tears on bidding good-by to her maiden life and liberty; but I had scarcely expected to see you do so, inasmuch as you have less to regret, and more to hope for, than most young maidens similarly situated—nevertheless, I suppose these 'natural tears' must fall!" said I, gently caressing her.

She replied mockingly:

"Ah! it is quite proper for a bride to weep then? Like the ring and the white kid gloves, it is an indispensable ingredient in the wedding-dish!—it is understood and expected of us, in short—and people would be shocked and disappointed if it were omitted."

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"Regina—sister," said I, tenderly.

"Certainly! Half the trashy songs I learned to sing at school were—not after my own taste, the martial—but such mawkish ditties as the 'Bride's Adieu,' etc."

"Hump! Wolfgang's queerities are certainly contagious; that I know of my own experience," said I; and I dropped suddenly into a short reverie upon the contagion of resemblance between persons of no consanguinity who love each other and are constantly associated.

Feeling too deeply interested in my sister's emotions to indulge, even for five minutes, in this tempting subject, I turned, stole my arm around her waist, and said, gently:

"Regina, my dearest sister, to-morrow I will scarcely have a right to do this," and I gathered her to my bosom, and pressed my lips to hers. "To-morrow, certainly, I shall have no right to question your happiness, or the state of your affections; do not, therefore, be proud or cold toward me, like your worse self; and do not be sarcastic, bitter, or satirical toward me, for

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that is not like yourself at all. That you have caught from Wolfgang; but, tell me, what has so deeply, so strongly moved you this evening? It is not an imaginery grief, nor a real one, if slight, that could trouble you so much—what is it then?"

She did not reply; but remained in my lap with her arms thrown up over my shoulders, and her face over my bosom.

I spoke again.

"You have apparently less to alloy your happiness than almost any other bride. You have less to regret and more to hope for. You leave no dear, familiar home, no honored father, no beloved mother, no dear sister—wherefore should you grieve?"

"I leave you, my dearest brother! I leave you, the sole remnant of our family circle! I leave you, who stood to me for father, mother, sister, home!"

"Yet leaving me, dearest Regina, should not cost you a sigh! nay it will not! Dearly as we have ever loved each other, we have not been together much; therefore you will still remem-

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ber and love me, without throwing away a sigh upon my absence."

"Yes! so you have judged my heart! You have studied me so well!" she replied, almost bitterly. "The one thing I looked forward to in life was a reunion with my only brother, Ferdinand—and you know it was the main topic of all my letters; yet now you judge me able to part with you for a long, indefinite time—perhaps forever—without pain."

"At least, so I would have it, dearest sister. I am not so selfish as to wish you to regret my absence!"

"But I should regret it! I shall regret it, if I cannot persuade you to go with us, as I hope to do! as I must do!"

"As you will not do! But it is not I for whom or by whom you sorow now! Tell me, then, what it is, dearest sister, while it is not yet too late! To-morrow—yes! in seven hours from this—for it is now one o'clock—I shall have no right to ask you!"

"I will tell you, then. My heart is dreadfully oppressed! Oh, how I do wish that I had a

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mother, an aunt, a married sister, a matronly friend—any wise gentlewoman, upon whose bosom I could lay my head as I lay it now on yours, and ask her in a whisper if upon the eve of her bridal day she was visited with such terrible forebodings as I am now—such anxieties—such funeral presentiments!"

"How long has this been so with you, Regina?"

"Oh! for days, or rather for nights past—in the daytime I have been amused, and forgetful, but at night, as soon as I get to sleep, I start from my first sleep in a terrible panic! just as a condemned criminal might be awakened out of deep, sweet sleep, with the sudden recollection that he was shortly to be hanged. To-morrow is my wedding day; yet it terrifies me as though it was the day of my execution! I do not believe Madame Roland and the heroines of the Reign of Terror dreaded the guillotine half as much as I dread the altar!"

Gloomily as my sister spoke, or, perhaps, because she did speak so gloomily of what appeared to me to be only considerable exaggera-

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tion of a very natural feeling, for the life of me I could not help laughing, in which, to my surprise, I was joined by Regina, who raised her head from its resting place, and, arising from my lap, sat down beside me.

"I would be an old maid, then, if I were you. There is no law against it, and this is a free country," said I.

"I know it is foolish—this presentiment——"

"Presentiment!"

"Yes, presentiment—this dark, uncertain, slippery, cold feeling of the precipice edge!" she replied, gravely—her flush of mirth quite gone.

"But this will pass away in a few days, Regina. You love Wolfgang."

"Yes, and dread him more! Oh! listen, Ferdinand! Listen, my dear brother! I will open my heart to you this first and last time! for once! for to-morow, as you say, you will have no right to inquire into the secrets of my bosom. I will have no right to communicate them to-morow; this would be an infringement of my marriage vow; to-morrow my oath of al-

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legiance would make these confidences treachery. Listen then. I do love Wolfgang quite as much as I am capable of loving any one—almost as much as he loves me. I have loved him almost from the first evening of our meeting; but, since our engagement, lately—now listen! for, contradictory as what I am now about to tell you may appear, it is nevertheless true—though inexplicable to me, as it may seem to you. Lately, as I said, while I am strongly attached to Wolfgang, I am strongly repulsed! It is as if some principle in my being were powerfully drawn toward him, while another principle was as powerfully repelled; or, as if some element in Wolfgang's nature possesses for me irresistible fascination, while some other element affects me with disgust—which fills me with remorse—which I endeavor to conquer—which I only succeed in concealing!"

"You have succeeded in that! I never suspected it!"

"Thus, you see, my bosom is made the battlefield of warring emotions, and over all

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broods this dark presentiment, like the lowering, black clouds of some approaching and destructive storm!"

"Do not marry him!" said I, earnestly.

"I must! The hand of fate is on me! I have no power to stop myself!"

"Then I can stop you! I can be stronger than fate! You shall not be married!"

"But I will. I love him! If I had the power I would tear out from my bosom that which occasionally recoils from him, though it were one ventricle of my heart! It is half-past one o'clock; my marriage day has come, dearest brother; dearest, only brother! I only came in to kiss you."

"To give me an opportunity, for the last time, of pressing my maiden sister to my bosom," said I, as I held her there.

"Yes! and with no intention of afflicting you with my equinoctial storms——"

"Your—what?"

"My equinoctial storms—the clouds, the thunder, lightnings, and showers, that have marked my approach to the line matrimonial!"

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And dashing clouds and tears from her now sparkling face, she kissed me and vanished from the room.

In the silence of the night, after she had left the chamber, I heard the pattering of raindrops against the windows. I went to them and looked out, and found the sky black and lowering with clouds, and the streets drenched with rain. I turned away, and at last, throwing off my clothes, lay down to try to sleep. My spirits were heavily oppressed. There is nothing more disheartening than to feel some evil fate impending over those we love, and to know ourselves powerless to avert it. However, wearied out, and lulled by the sedative pattering of the raindrops, I fell into a dreamless sleep, and slept till morning.

It was a dark, drizzling, dull morning. At seven o'clock we met in the parlor, to go together to the church. We had ordered breakfast at eight. The stage in which we had engaged places was to start at nine. Wallraven looked happy and—frightened, and seemed to strive for self-command.

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Regina's countenance, like a spring sky, seemed all the brighter for her equinotical storm. She wore a beautiful dress of full white blonde over white satin, with fine lace trimmings, and pearl bracelets and necklace on her arms and neck, and a pearl bandeau turning back her blonde hair, and fastening a large, floating, mistlike veil. Miss Wallraven was attired in a somewhat similar style. Again I was struck by the contrast presented by these two young women—the blonde and the brunette—both so dazzling, beautiful, yet so unlike. One, clear, bright, morning sunshine—the other, resplendent starlight.

We stepped into the carriage, and were driven to the church. We found Bishop L—— punctual, waiting for us. We ranged ourselves before the altar, Constant and Constantia acting as groomsman and bridesmaid, and I giving away the bride.

After the ceremony was over, we returned, accompanied by Bishop L——, to breakfast, and, in an hour afterward, bidding adieu to our venerable friend, we took our seats in the

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stage and set out upon our journey to Virginia. The rain ceased and the sun shone out at noon.

It had been arranged among us, as the season was very beautiful, and certain parts of the country through which our roads lay was very picturesque, that we should travel leisurely, taking a week for the journey.

At Washington we found the large family carriage of the Wallravens, that had been sent to meet us there, and that had been waiting for us for several days. We remained in the city two days, to visit the Capitol, Navy Yard, Goverment departments, etc., and the third day entered the capacious and comfortable traveling carriage, and set off for the Blue Ridge and Hickory Hall. This journey, from Washington to the Blue Ridge, was one of the most delightful journeys I ever took. Our carriage was not only convenient, it was luxurious. We were attended by our own servants, took our own route, and kept our own hours. We managed to be six days on a route that we might have traveled in two. Sometimes, at

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sunrise, after an early breakfast, we would leave the inn at which we had passed the night, and travel leisurely but twenty miles through some picturesque country, reach another quaint country inn by noon, eat dinner, and, after an hour's repose, order saddle horses, spend the afternoon in excursions about the neighborhood, return to tea, and occupy the evening in conversation, or books and music, with which we were provided. We would sleep then, and the next morning, resume our journey, which would be continued with some pleasant new variation. Miss Wallraven and myself were thrown very much together. I found her mind and heart as rich and well cultivated as her person was beautiful and her manners charming. I admired her with enthusiasm; yet, not for one moment was I in the slightest danger of falling in love with her, even if there had not been something in her manner that politely kept me at a certain distance. As for Regina and Wolfgang, they behaved very much like any other bride and groom upon their wedding journey

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—they seemed fond, and shy, and tremulously happy.

In approaching the mountains, and the old neighborhood of the Northern Neck, first settled by her ancestors, Regina became deeply interested in features of the landscape and the local history of the country. Upon reaching any high point of the road, she would order the carriage to be stopped, and while she surveyed the extensive and varied landscape, with its far-apart country-seats and farmhouses, surrounded with their little townlike groups of outhouses and negro quarters, and while she picked out with her quick and scrutinizing glances the oldest homesteads of the old settlements, she would ask Constant Wallraven a score of questions about their first proprietors. The public and private history of many families she knew by fireside traditions, so as to recognize them as soon as they were named, and look with another and deeper interest at the places of their habitation.

On approching, however, that grand pass of the Blue Ridge, known as the Bear's Walk, the

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historical and traditional interest of the country gave place in her mind to a rapt enthusiasm, as she gazed, silenced and transfixed with admiration and awe, upon the sublime and even savage aspect of nature.

It was the fifth day of our journey that we began to ascend the great pass of the Bear's Walk, from the highest point of which Regina gained her first view of Hickory Hall, and saw it under the most favorable circumstances, and in the most favorable light.

We had ridden slowly that day, only fifteen miles, and through the most sublime and beautiful scenery in the world; and now, quite fresh, we found ourselves in the middle of a lovely summer afternoon, upon the summit of the mountain-pass, and gazing down with delighted surprise upon a scene of almost ideal beauty, not to be equaled on earth.

I wondered at the enchanting transformation made by a different and more genial season, and another and a brighter hour. The scene which, on a dark, tempestuous winter night, had seemed a Gehenna, a Hades, to me, now, in

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the light of a summer day, appeared a Happy Valley, a Garden of Eden—Elysium itself.

A cup-shaped, small, and deep-green vale, shut in by a circle of high mountains. Deep in the bottom of this green vale, gemlike, was set the old hall, where, in the beams of the evening sun, it glittered and flashed with the ruby lustre of long-exposed red sandstone, around it spread green pastures, embossed with white flocks of sheep; beyond these waved yellow fields of grain, ripe for the sickle; around them passed a girdle of forest trees—behind which arose the circle of intense blue mountains, with their summits against the transparent, golden horizon. Through all ran the clear mountain stream, which, springing from a rock at our feet, and leaping down the side of a precipice, gilded, flashing in the sun, through the mist of the beautiful vale. Over all smiled the most radiant sky—shone the most splendid sun I had ever seen.

"How beautiful! how beautiful! It is a terrestrial paradise!" exclaimed Regina, with enthusiasm. "But," inquired she, of Constant

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Wallraven, while scrutinizing the old hall, "why does not your father repair, or rather rebuild, the house?"

"My father thinks of selling the property."

"Of selling that Eden?"

"Yes! and we all think it the best plan, under existing circumstances."

The difficult descent of the precipice interrupted further conversation. The road, however, was in its best condition, and, in twenty minutes, we had reached the bottom, and soon after drew up before the door of Hickory Hall.

Mr. Wallraven, with the same suit of black, contrasting so strongly with his snow-white hair, with the same venerable appearance, the same social and stately bearing, advanced from the hall to receive us.

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CHAPTER X.

THE HAG.

"A fearful sign stands in thy house of life.
An enemy, a fiend lurks close behind
The radiance of thy planet; oh, be warned!"

—COLERIDGE.

Wolfgang, alighting, handed out Regina, and, leading her up the stone steps, presented her with stately and affectionate courtesy. We all followed in turn, and were welcomed in the most cordial manner.

Mr. Wallraven conducted Regina into the house. I followed, with Miss Wallraven upon my arm. Constant and Wolfgang paused behind an instant, and, as I turned to look after them, I saw old John at the end of the portico, and beheld Wolfgang step up to him, and heard him inquire, rapidly, under his breath:

"Is she safe?"

And the low reply:

"All secure there, sir!"

"That is well! I shall remember your care for us, John."

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The old man bowed in silence, and Wolfgang immediately stepped after us. This little interlude had not occupied ten seconds.

We entered the hall, and were each immediately shown to our separate room.

Old John took me into a different chamber from that which I had occupied before, telling me, with a slight smile, that my former sleeping apartment had been prepared for Mrs. Wallraven, as it was the most comfortable one in the house.

He then went and ordered up my baggage, and in the course of half an hour, with the help of John, I refreshed myself with a bath, a shave and a change of dress.

I even went down into the old oak hall, which had been furbished up in honor of the bride's arrival—that is the oak floor and paneled wall had been rubbed, waxed, and polished, until they shone with a mirrorlike lustre, and the wide fireplace had been filled with cedar branches, while on the mantelpiece and on the window-sills were placed vases filled with white lilies, Regina's favorite flowers.

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I found in the drawing-room, with Mr. Wallraven and Constant, Mr. and Mrs. Davenport, and two young ladies, their cousins—all of whom had come over to Hickory Hall to meet our bridal party.

In a few minutes, Wolfgang and Regina entered, and it was evident her dazzling fairness and stately grace, her whole high, pure style of beauty and of bearing, made what is called a great "sensation," though on a small scale—namely, the small party met there to welcome her.

Soon after the introductions were over, dinner was announced. Well! this dinner was like most other Virginia country wedding dinners—more abundance than elegance, and more hospitality than ostentation.

Soon after an early tea, the Davenport party took leave, previously inviting the Wallravens and myself to dine at the parsonage the third day from that—an invitation which Wolfgang accepted in the name of the whole family.

When they were gone, we returned from the

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portico, where we had been standing to see them off, and re-entered the hall.

It was a pleasant place in a summer evening twilight. There were many windows, commanding various sublime and beautiful views, and soft, warm, pleasant airs, and the sweet, vague musical sounds came through them.

I noticed Wolfgang and Regina seated at one of the end windows enjoying the delicious hour without conversation, or only conversing by seeking each other's eyes, or by an occasional low tone.

When the full harvest moon arose, Mr. Wallraven invited us all to come out and walk, and view the scenery by moonlight. With the same stateliness of an old-school gentleman, he gave his arm to Regina, and led the way. Each member of the family vied with each other in assiduous yet delicate attentions to our bride. We spent an hour very pleasantly in strolling through the beautiful and moonlit vale, and then returned to the drawing-room, where refreshments were ordered.

While we were standing around the center-

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table in gay conversation (never before had I seen any member of the family so cheerful), old John appeared at the door with an anxious expression on his time-worn face.

Mr. Wallraven arose in haste and went out to him. Constantia turned pale, and Wolfgang glared at the intruder with starting eyes and a scowling brow.

I saw that some misfortune had occurred, or was about to occur.

Mr. Wallraven closed the door behind him while talking with the old man; while Wolfgang, as if lost in the sense of other presence, continued to strain his gaze after them.

In a moment, Mr. Wallraven put his head in the door, and beckoned Wolfgang. He started up and shot from the room, without a word of excuse or apology, banging the door to after him. Constant and myself were left alone with the two young ladies.

Regina looked in surprise from the brother to the sister, and then, with her habitual self-possession and politeness, lowered the blaze of the solar lamp so as to throw a soft light upon

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the table, and, taking up an engraving, made some critical remarks upon its merits, submitting it to Constantia's judgment.

But Constantia was pale, trembling, and *distrait*, and gave some reply wide of the mark.

Constant, however, with a deferential "Permit me, madam," took, and, with Regina, examined the picture. Constant was pale and stern, and seemed to have mastered the betrayal of some strong emotion.

They criticised the picture, which was "The Writing on the Wall."

Regina, Constant, and myself, might have passed a tolerable hour, had it not been for Miss Wallraven's increasing and extreme distress. She looked like a second Cassandra, and would start and shudder, pale and glare, as though in momentary expectation of some appalling sight. Her anxiety became so intense that apparently she could endure it no longer, but touched the bell, and, at the entrance of a servant, ordered chamber lights, and, turning to Regina, said:

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"Mrs. Wallraven! the clock is on the stroke of twelve, and you have had a fatiguing day. I am ready to show you to your chamber."

Regina arose, and, slightly bowing her "Good-night," left the room, followed by Constantia. I soon after arose and retired to my room, which was on the same floor with that of Regina.

I know not what presentiment suddenly overcrept my mind, but, oppressed with a vague and terrible anxiety, I sought to sleep in vain.

Finally I returned to the drawing-room. Constant was gone. It was now empty. The room was so large that the light upon the center-table barely served to make darkness visible, except in its immediate vicinity. I put up the light of the lamp, and walked up and down the floor, restlessly expecting, but without connecting that feeling with my unaccountable gloom, the return of Mr. Wallraven and Wolfgang. I know not how long I might have been waiting there, when the door swung noiselessly open, and Regina re-entered the room, her hair in disorder, and a dressing-gown hastily thrown

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on. I turned wonderingly to meet her. I saw then that her fair face was blue-pale, and that she trembled with a nervousness I had never seen her betray before.

"My dear sister! what is the matter?" asked I, leading her to an easy-chair, into which she immediately sank.

"I do not know! Perhaps a dream! Perhaps something real. Listen! I went to my chamber attended by Miss Wallraven only, and no dressing-maid. Miss Wallraven assisted me to disrobe; but, every few minutes, with a corrugated brow and straining eye, she paused to listen or to watch. Finally she concluded her task, and when I was in bed she drew the curtains, and was about to leave me. Suddenly she turned back and advised me to bolt the door behind her, and then left the room. I did not get up to bolt the door, because I should have had to get up a second time to open it, but I fell asleep, wondering what negro might be on the point of death, or what other trouble had called the Messrs. Wallraven so abruptly from the house. Well! I had no sooner

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fallen into a deep sleep, than I awakened as by the shock of a galvanic battery, just in time to see the most diabolical-looking old hag that ever nightmare created stooping over me, gazing into my opened eyes with a grin of malignity that seemed to freeze all the blood in my veins. I started violently forward, and she vanished. I was instantly bathed in a cold sweat. I thought this might be a dream, and resolutely composed myself to sleep again—only to be started out of my sleep again by another and a more violent electric shock, and to see again the same eyes of demoniac hatred gazing into mine, to make another instinctive bound, and see the terrible night-haunter vanish as before! It was impossible now to sleep or think of sleep. I hastily threw on my dressing-gown, slipped my feet into slippers, and came down here to await the gentlemen. I have heard of nightmare, but this is the first time I ever was attacked with it, and it was very natural that my excited imagination should then create the illusion of the old hag, after you telling me of what you saw or fancied

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you saw in that chamber the first night you slept there. There! I feel humiliated at these tremors, which I cannot control. Ferdinand! there she is now!"

This last sentence was spoken in a tone of discovery and announcement, as one might use upon finding out an imaginary phantom to be an ugly old woman. I turned and saw, standing within the door in the full light of the candle she held above her head, the hag of my night-vision. She was the most loathsome specimen of humanity I had ever seen, as she stood there some seconds, examining us with the same leer of insult and malignity. There she stood, chuckling with a fiendish grin at the very loathing she excited—repaying the extreme of disgust with the extreme of hatred.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"Hik-hik-hik-hik!" she answered, with her low, wicked laugh, passing me, and going toward Regina.

"Leave the room!" said I, intercepting her.

She did not heed me, but went on.

"Will you leave the room?" again I asked.

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"Yes, when I have kissed my pretty niece," she replied, nodding her head at me with a demon grin.

I stepped quickly up to Regina, with the intention of leading her from the room, and from the revolting presence of what I now supposed to be some gibbering and malign lunatic.

I drew Regina's arm within my own, and we were coming down the length of the room, my sister with an expression of disgust amounting to pain contracting her beautiful features. We passed to one side, in order to avoid meeting the hag; but she knew our purpose, crossed the room, and intercepted us.

"Out of our way! Off with yourself instantly!" exclaimed I, angrily.

"Yes! when I have kissed my pretty niece!"

"Begone!" said I, turning off to the other side.

"Yes! I will, when I kiss my pretty niece!" she persisted.

I did not wish to hurt, and I could not have brought myself to touch the filthy creature. I took up a parasol that lay upon the table, and,

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placing one end of it against her chest, bore her gently off. She left, and, retreating, planted herself within the doorway. I came on with my weapon, half-laughing at the Quixotic figure I cut, charging upon a mad, old negro woman with a parasol, and placed the end of it, as before, against her chest, saying:

"Come! Be good! let us pass!"

But suddenly she raised her talon hand, clutched my weapon, threw it behind her, and, elevating the streaming tallow candle with the other, gazed upon Regina with a countenance full of curiosity, hatred, and expected triumph. My sister drew her arm from mine, and retreated.

"Hik-hik-hik! my pretty niece; you are very fair and very proud! but pride goeth before a fall, and a haughty temper before destruction."

"Off with yourself this moment!" said I, losing patience, "or I shall be tempted to contaminate myself, and put you out!"

"I dare you to touch me!" she said.

"I shall certainly do so, if you do not move in one minute."

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"Yes! in a minute; but let me kiss my fair, pretty niece first!"

"You are mad! That lady is Mrs. Wallraven!"

"I know it! My nephew Wolfgang's wife!"

I still thought her crazy; nevertheless, an icy pang shot through my heart.

"Who are you?" said I.

"Nell! Old Nell! Yellow Nell! Slave Nell! Hugh Wallraven's sister-in-law! Wolfgang Wallraven's aunt—his mother's sister! Regina Wallraven's near relative! Yes! fair lady! proud as fair! you are my niece."

I turned to look on Regina! to behold a body petrified, as it were, to stone!—from whence the light of reason had fled instantly and forever!

"Come! let me embrace my niece!" and, laughing hideously, she advanced toward my sister.

Regina turned, stepped upon a footstool, thence upon a chair, finally upon the center-table, and seated herself upon a pile of books with an air of mad majesty and dominion.

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"Order out the guards! To prison with the traitors! To the rack! to the rack with the beldame! Ourself will preside at the question!"

I hurled away the hag, and went to my sister.

"Regina!"

"My Lord Chancellor, let the Prince of Darkness be immediately arrested upon our own charge of high treason!"

"Regina! my dear sister!"

"Let there be no delay! Summon the council! Our life and crown are no longer safe! Traitors lurk in our very bedchamber, assassins hide in the very shadow of our throne! Already one of the ladies of our bedchamber—our beloved Regina Fairfield—lies dead before us! The shaft that pierced her heart was aimed at our own sacred life!"

"My God! My God!"

"To the rack! to the rack with the beldame! Strain every limb and nerve and sinew to cracking, until she confess herself the tool of the Prince of Darkness!"

"Oh! Heaven!"

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"To the rack! to the rack with the hag! We will ourself preside at the question!"

"Regina!"

"Order out the guards! Summon the council! To prison! to prison with the traitor!" she exclaimed, rising in a sort of mad majesty, her form elevated and dilating, her eye blazing with the fire of insanity, her unbound golden locks rolling in fallen glory to her waist, her left hand folding her rich dressing-gown about her as though it were the ermine purple, her right hand extended in a gesture of high command—a moment—and then lowered with the finger pointed to the door, as she said: "Lo! where the traitor Prince obtrudes himself into our very presence!"

I turned to see at a glance Wolfgang Wallraven enter the room, and the hag shake her clenched fist at him, saying:

"Now is my hatred glutted! Now is my revenge complete. Look to your fair wife!"

Wolfgang's lightning glance caught the whole state of affairs instantly. Rage, grief, and despair stormed in his face. With the

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bound of an unchained demon he sprang upon the hag, and, with his hands round her throat, bore her down to the floor, placed his knee upon her chest, and nearly strangled her before I could prevent him. Rising, he spurned the beldame with his foot, and turned toward us. His typhoon of anger had subsided; despair, sorrow, tenderness, were all to be seen now, as he approached Regina.

"Off, traitor!" she shouted, seizing from the table an antique dagger, that lay there as an article of rare *vertu.*

He drew near her.

"Off, I say!" she exclaimed, unsheathing and brandishing the dagger. "You come to death!"

"I know it," said Wolfgang.

"Off, traitor! you desecrate our very throne! Nay, then, it shall become your scaffold!" exclaimed she, furiously, shaking the dagger.

"Let me die so," he said, and stepped upon the footstool, thence upon the table, and threw his arms around her.

With a savage cry she raised the weapon;

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the blade gleamed in the lamplight an instant, and the next was buried deep in the breast of the wretched man, who, without a groan, fell backward, and rolled upon the floor. In the extreme frenzy of mania, Regina bounded from the table, brandishing the crimsoned dagger.

I threw myself suddenly upon her, cast my arms about her, but her struggles were so violent, and her maniac strength so great, that she must have escaped me, had not her screams brought the whole household from their beds and into the room.

The scene of amazement, horror, anguish, and despair that ensued now defies all description. In the stormy chaos, I saw old Mr. Wallraven, sitting on the floor, with the form of the fast-dying Wolfgang drawn into his arms and pillowed upon his chest. I saw Constantia, half-dressed, with her black hair streaming, kneeling by his side, wringing her hands.

I saw all this, while, with the assistance of Constant Wallraven, I was disarming and securing the maniac.

"Father! she was mad, father! Do not let

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her be molested; do not desert her. Protect her, father," faintly murmured the dying man.

"Unhappy boy! tell me one thing. You did not deceive her! You told her your position!"

"Father, no! I had not the courage! I thought to have got her to France, where—oh, God! I die!—where she would never have known——"

"Oh, wretched Wolfgang! I cannot reproach you now! This deception has cost you your life!"

"And her, her reason, father! I die by her hand! It is just! it is just! it is just! Oh! bring me near her! Let me see her again! Lay me at her feet! Let me die there!"

"Oh! Wolfgang! that you so terribly deceived that unhappy young lady!"

"I loved her so—I loved her so—that, for the brief possession of her love, I endure death. Father! she must not die! She must recover. Nay, she will, when she knows her evil genius, her mortal foe, who loved her unto death, is dead! Take me to her! Lay me at her feet! Let me die there, looking upon her!"

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Regina was now lying on the sofa, exhausted by her frantic struggles. Old Mr. Wallraven beckoned Constant, and between them Wolfgang was lifted, brought near the sofa, and laid upon the carpet, with his head supported, as before, upon his father's arms. He looked up at her, but she did not open her eyes to look upon him. He feebly raised his hand and took hers. At the touch she opened her eyes, and, as soon as they fell upon him, with a frenzied cry of anguish and despair, she bounded to her feet, foaming at the mouth, and went into the most violent paroxysm of madness. Constant Wallraven and myself seized and tried to hold her; and, while she was struggling, plunging, and screaming in our arms, Wolfgang raised himself upon his elbow, gave one long, agonized look upon the wreck, fell back and died!

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CHAPTER XI.

THE FATE.

"Thus lived—thus died they—never more on them
Shall sorrow light, or shame."—BYRON.

The next day a coroner's inquest sat in the saloon, and the crowd, collected by the rumor of what had taken place, filled the house. I was the principal witness, and as soon as I had given in my testimony, and was permitted to retire, I wandered toward the chamber whence the terrible screams of the maniac bride still issued, filling all the air.

Constant, Constantia and myself were constant and unremitting in our attentions to my wretched sister. For two days and nights she raved in high delirium, and then sank, under the united effects of nervous exhaustion and opiates, into a profound stupor.

Upon this second day the remains of the unfortunate Wolfgang Wallraven were committed to the grave. His funeral was perfectly quiet, attended by his own family and the Davenports.

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During all this time I could realize to myself nothing that had taken or was taking place. I seemed out of myself, in some unreal existence, and, sometimes wildly, desperately, hoped to wake and find it all a hideous dream.

That evening, when we returned from the funeral, I followed Mr Wallraven to the library.

"Give me," said I, "some explanation of that which has wrecked all our happiness!"

"Be seated!" said the old man, himself sinking exhausted into a chair. I sat down and waited for him to speak. He leaned his forehead down upon his open palm, and, after a silence of a few minutes, sighed heavily, and said:

"I am unequal now to to the task of giving you any lengthy detail. Listen, then! I married my mother's maid. She was a quadroon girl, brought up at my mother's knee; a simple, gentle child, whose life of chamber seclusion had kept her unspotted from the world; a loving, religious child, whose faith in her Heavenly Father was like a babe's innocent trust in

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its mother. She had been taught in her childhood almost to worship her 'young master'—the mother's spoiled and willful boy—the idol of the household. She learned in girlhood to love him with all the blind and passionate devotion of her race. I had the power of life and death over her—yea, of eternal life and death—for her life hung upon my love—her integrity upon my honor. The alternative for her was a ruined fame, a broken heart and the grave, or the marriage ring and benediction. The alternative for me was sin without infamy, or infamy without sin—or so it seemed to me in my passionate youth. I choose the latter. I loved her, I married her, and lost caste, I and my children, forever! The whole community recoiled in loathing from us. The minister who united us was ungowned and degraded from his pulpit. Our marriage was declared illegal, and my mother, to oblige me to break the connection, made a will, just before her death, by which she left me Constance and her children, upon condition only of my never freeing them. Upon my attempting to break this condtion, they

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were to become the property of a distant relative. Constance brought me three children—Wolfgang, unhappy boy! and then Constant and Constantia. But they could not be my heirs, because they could not legally hold property. At my death they themselves would inevitably become the property of others. And the more legal light I brought to bear upon my mother's will, the more decided was this fact. My other property—the land, negroes, bank stock, hall, and mills—I inherited from my father, without restriction. I was unutterably wretched. Constance, seeing the misery of which she had been the innocent cause, fell into a deep melancholy, from which neither the affection of her children, nor my own love and unremitting endeavors could arouse her. Her health failed, and she died when Constant and Constantia were but twelve months old. Again I consulted the ablest lawyers in the State, only to be more than ever convinced that there was no possibility of setting aside my mother's will. There was not in all Virginia a father so unhappy as myself. A thousand times I prayed

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for the death of my children. If one of them fell ill, I watched the progress of his or her illness with extreme anxiety, not fearing they might die, but fearing they might live! Conscience, and not a wish that they should survive, induced me to provide necessary nursing and medical attendance at such time. At last it suddenly occurred to me that I might easily evade the will. It is strange that this expedient never struck me until years of misery had passed; but so it was in my case, and so I have often seen it in the case of others. The remedies for what we conceive to be incurable ills often lie very near us, unseen or neglected. It suddenly struck me that nothing hindered my sending my children, while they were mine, to a foreign country, and transferring my whole property thither. I resolved to do so. My sons were then at college, and my daughter at boarding-school in the North. I was in robust health, and of a race never subject to illness or sudden death; therefore I felt that there was no occasion for hurry, and I was not in haste to sell, and leave forever my native soil, while my

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children were receiving their education. I determined, however, to do it upon the first indication of declining health. Well, month slipped after month, and grew into years. Constant returned from Princeton, where he was educated, and commenced the study of divinity as a private pupil of Mr. Davenport. He formed an unhappy attachment, but Constant possessed a strong mind and righteous heart. He struggled with, and conquered, his passion, coming out as pure gold from the furnace of his trial. After this experience, I determined to guard my unhappy children from forming indiscreet attachments.

"When Wolfgang returned from Harvard, accompanied by yourself, I saw your sudden admiration of my daughter. I withdrew her from your presence. I warned Wolfgang against the society of young ladies. I knew nothing of your sister, or I never should have consented to his visiting you at your own home. The first knowledge I had of Miss Fairfield was from the letter of Wolfgang that announced his engagement. Without literally telling me

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so, it was couched in such terms as, with other circumstances, to mislead me into the belief that she knew all! This was not unnatural. I thought that to some his infinitesimal proportion of African blood might be no objection—while his many distinguished—— Pardon me! It was a father's dotage. Wolfgang told me in his letter that his bride had consented to depart with him to France immediately after the marriage ceremony. This afforded me the opportunity I wanted to secure a fortune to my son, by settling it upon Miss Fairfield—to which there could be no legal obstruction. A few weeks before the marriage I received a long letter from Wolfgang, telling me that his Regina, willful as charming, insisted on coming to Hickory Hall, and being introduced to her father-in-law before her departure for France. In this turn of affairs he requested me to send Constant and Constantia to him, and, above all things, to imprison old Nell, whose very sight would appall Regina, and whose extreme boldness and malignity would assuredly instigate her to present herself before the bride."

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"But what, then, is the ground of such malignity, and how could one so degraded be in any manner related to one so beautiful, so angelic, as was Constance, judging by your description of her, as well as by a portrait I saw and missed the same night from the walls of my chamber, and which I now suspect to have been hers?"

"Yes, it was hers; old Nell stole it that night. She had long wanted the small personal effects of Constance, and had watched her opportunity of getting into the closed chamber. You left your door unlocked, and she entered the room, rifled the bureau, and carried off the portrait, and had returned, it is likely, to rob you, when a slight sound of her steps attracted Wolfgang, who happened not to have retired, but was in the next room. He followed her into your chamber the last time, and arrested her at your bedside. You asked me the cause of Nell's malignity, and expresed astonishment at the idea of her relationship to Constance. She is, really, no blood-relation to Constance or my children.

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"She was the step-daughter of Constance's father, and hence the claim to relationship, hence her presumption to a high degree of notice and favor, even while her extreme deformity and her disgusting habits and vices made her very presence in the meanest capacity insufferable; and hence her envy, hatred and demoniac malignity. She openly said and swore among her fellows that she would 'kiss her pretty niece.' Upon the night, therefore, that the bridal party was expected, we locked her up in her remote cabin, charging old John with her custody. She escaped, and concealed herself, evidently with the object of seeking and insulting the bride. This gave me only uneasiness, for I supposed Regina at least knew our position; but it filled Wolfgang, who knew, and his brother and sister, who had lately discovered, the illusion under which your unhappy sister had given her hand in marriage, with consternation. While we were seeking the hag elsewhere, she had effected her entrance to the house, and found her way to Mrs. Wallraven's presence! You were there! You know bet-

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ter than myself what followed. It is necessary to repeat, however, that there, for the first time, I discovered the concealment that had been used toward the ill-fated lady. I have nothing more to tell. If I have sinned against the conventional usages of the society in which I was born and lived, my whole life has been one long and terrible expiation."

I took his hand and pressed it, and silently withdrew from the room.

In the course of a week I discovered that there was no one who possessed the least moral control over the maniac girl except Constantia. Mr. Wallraven prayed that she should remain at Hickory Hall, when I talked of removing her. In truth, the change from their affectionate though sorrowful care to that of a lunatic asylum would have been a most unfortunate one for the victim. She had the best medical advice that the country could produce, or wealth could purchase. For more than a year her malady has constantly increased, until it has left her the ruin you see.

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I, also, Mary, was nearly blighted when you met, pitied, loved me

* * * * * * * *

The reading of the manuscript had occupied the whole night. It was sunrise when I folded it up, and began to make my simple morning toilet. Before this was completed a low tap was heard at the door, and, to my "come in," Mary entered, apparently just returned from her nightly visit.

She sat down by the fire.

"You have been to see Regina Fairfield, at Hickory Hall?" said I.

"Yes," she replied.

"And she——"

"Died at one this morning—died in her senses—reason had returned at the approach of dissolution. She died forgiving all who had had a hand in her betrayal and wreck, and praying forgiveness for herself. She died upon Constantia's bosom."

We attended the funeral of Regina Fairfield, which was conducted with great simplicity. We left Cedar Cliffs soon after. Upon our re-

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turn from Virginia we lost sight of the Wallravens of Hickory Hall for many years. We heard frequently by letter from Mary Fairfield, and knew that the health and spirits of Ferdinand were gradually improving. In one of her letters to me, Mary mentioned that old Mr. Wallraven had sold the property of Hickory Hall, and left the State, accompanied by his two children. This was the first and last time that Mary ever mentioned them in any of her letters.

THE END.

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THE GILBERTS;

OR,

RICE CORNER NUMBER TWO.

CHAPTER I.

THE GILBERTS.

THE spring following Carrie Howard's death Rice Corner was thrown into a commotion by the astounding fact that Captain Howard was going out West, and had sold his farm to a gentleman from the city, whose wife "kept six servants, wore silk all the time, never went inside of the kitchen, never saw a churn, breakfasted at ten, dined at three, and had supper the next day!"

Such was the story which Mercy Jenkins detailed to us early one Monday morning, and then, eager to communicate so desirable a piece of news to others of her acquaintance, she started off, stopping for a moment as she passed the wash-room to see if Sally's clothes "wan't kinder dingy and yaller." As soon as she was gone the astonishment of our household broke forth, grandma wondering why Captain Howard wanted to go to the ends of the earth, as she designated Chicago, their place of destination, and what she should do without Aunt Eunice, who, having been born on grandma's wedding-day, was very dear to her, and then her age was so easy to keep. But the best of friends must part, and when at Mrs. Howard's last tea-drinking with us I saw how badly they all felt, and how many tears were shed, I firmly resolved never to like anybody but my own folks, unless, indeed, I made an exception in favor of Tom Jenkins, who so often drew me to school on his sled, and who made such comical looking jack-o'-lanterns out of the big yellow pumpkins.

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In reply to the numerous questions concerning Mr. Gilbert, the purchaser of their farm, Mrs. Howard could only reply that he was very wealthy and had got tired of living in the city; adding, further, that he wore a "monstrous pair of musquitoes," had an evil-looking eye, four children, smoked cigars, and was a lawyer by profession. This last was all grandma wanted to know about him—"that told the whole story," for there never was but *one* decent lawyer, and that was Mr. Evelyn, Cousin Emma's husband. Dear old lady! when a few years ago, she heard that I, her favorite grandchild, was to marry one of the craft, she made another exception in his favor, saying that "if he wasn't all straight, Mary would soon make him so!"

Within a short time after Aunt Eunice's visit she left Rice Corner, and on the same day wagon-load after wagon-load of Mr. Gilbert's furniture passed our house, until Sally declared "there was enough to keep a tavern, and she didn't see nothin' where theys' goin' to put it," at the same time announcing her intention of "running down there after dinner, to see what was going on."

It will be remembered that Sally was now a married woman —"Mrs. Michael Welsh;" consequently, mother, who lived with her, instead of her living with mother, did not presume to interfere with her much, though she hinted pretty strongly that she "always liked to see people mind their own affairs." But Sally was incorrigible. The dinner dishes were washed with a whew, I was coaxed into sweeping the back room—which I did, leaving the dirt under the broom behind the door—while Mrs. Welsh, donning a pink calico, blue shawl, and bonnet trimmed with dark green, started off on her prying excursion, stopping by the roadside where Mike was making fence, and keeping him, as grandma said, "full half an hour by the clock from his work."

Not long after Sally's departure a handsome carriage, drawn by two fine bay horses, passed our house; and as the windows were down we could plainly discern a pale, delicate-looking lady, wrapped in shawls, a tall, stylish-looking girl, another one about my own age, and two beautiful little boys.

"That's the Gilberts, I know," said Anna. "Oh, I'm so glad Sally's gone, for now we shall have the full particulars;" and again we waited as impatiently for Sally's return as we had once done before for grandma.

At last, to our great relief, the green ribbons and blue shawl

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were descried in the distance, and ere long Sally was with us, ejaculating, "Oh, my—mercy me!" etc., thus giving us an inkling of what was to follow. "Of all the sights that ever I have seen," said she, folding up the blue shawl, and smoothing down the pink calico. "There's carpeting enough to cover every crack and crevice—all pure bristles, too!"

Here I tittered, whereupon Sally angrily retorted, that "she guessed she knew how to talk proper, if she hadn't studied grarmar."

"Never mind," said Anna, "go on; brussels carpeting and what else?"

"Mercy knows what else," answered Sally. "I can't begin to guess the names of half the things. There's mahogany, and rosewood, and marble fixin's—and in Miss Gilbert's room there's lace curtains and silk damson ones"—

A look from Anna restrained me this time, and Sally continued

"Mercy Jenkins is there, helpin', and she says Mr. Gilbert told 'em, his wife never et a piece of salt pork in her life, and knew no more how bread was made than a child two years old."

"What a simple critter she must be," said grandma, while Anna asked if she saw Mrs. Gilbert, and if that tall girl was her daughter.

"Yes, I seen her," answered Sally, "and I guess she's weakly, for the minit she got into the house she lay down on the sofa, which Mr. Gilbert says cost seventy-five dollars. That tall, proud-lookin' thing they call Miss Adaline, but I'll warrant you don't catch me puttin' on the miss. I called her Adaline, and you had orto seen how her big eyes looked at me. Says she, at last, 'Are you one of pa's new servants?'

"'Servants!' says I, 'no, indeed; I'm Mrs. Michael Welsh, one of your nighest neighbors.'

"Then I told her that there were two nice girls lived in the house with me, and she'd better get acquainted with 'em right away; and then with the hatefulest of all hateful laughs, she asked if 'they wore glass beads and went barefoot.'"

I fancied that neither Juliet nor Anna were greatly pleased at being introduced by Sally, the housemaid, to the elegant Adaline Gilbert, who had come to the country with anything but a favorable impression of its inhabitants. The second daughter, the one about my own age, Sally said they called Nellie; "and a nice, clever creature she is, too—not a bit stuck up like

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t'other one. Why, I do believe she'd walked every big beam in the barn before she'd been there half an hour, and the last I saw of her she was coaxing a cow to lie still while she got upon her back!"

How my heart warmed toward the romping Nellie, and how I wondered if after that beam-walking exploit her hooks and eyes were all in their places! The two little boys, Sally said, were twins, Edward and Egbert, or, as they were familiarly called, Bert and Eddie. This was nearly all she had learned, if we except the fact that the family ate with silver forks, and drank wine after dinner. This last, mother pronounced heterodox, while I, who dearly loved the juice of the grape, and sometimes left finger marks on the top shelf, whither I had climbed for a sip from grandma's decanter, secretly hoped I should some day dine with Nellie Gilbert, and drink all the wine I wanted, thinking how many times I'd rinse my mouth so mother shouldn't smell my breath!

In the course of a few weeks the affairs of the Gilbert family were pretty generally canvassed in Rice Corner, Mercy Jenkins giving it as her opinion that "Miss Gilbert was much the likeliest of the two, and that Mr. Gilbert was cross, overbearing, and big feeling."

CHAPTER II.

NELLIE.

As yet I had only seen Nellie in the distance, and was about despairing of making her acquaintance when accident threw her in my way. Directly opposite our house, and just across a long green meadow, was a piece of woods which belonged to Mr. Gilbert, and there, one afternoon early in May, I saw Nellie. I had seen her there before, but never dared approach her; and now I divided my time between watching her and a dense black cloud which had appeared in the west, and was fast approaching the zenith. I was just thinking how nice it would be if the rain should drive her to our house for shelter, when patter, patter came the large drops in my face; thicker and faster they fell, until it seemed like a perfect deluge; and through the almost blinding sheet of rain I descried Nellie coming toward me at a furious rate. With the agility of a fawn she bounded

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over the gate, and with the exclamation of, "Ain't I wetter than a drownded rat?" we were perfectly well acquainted.

It took but a short time to divest her of her dripping garments, and array her in some of mine, which Sally said "fitted her to a T," though I fancied she looked sadly out of place in my linen pantalets and long-sleeved dress. She was a great lover of fun and frolic, and in less than half an hour had "ridden to Boston" on Joe's rocking-horse, turned the little wheel faster than even I dared to turn it, tried on grandma's stays, and then, as a crowning feat, tried the rather dangerous experiment of riding down the garret stairs on a board! The clatter brought up grandma, and I felt some doubts about her relishing a kind of play which savored so much of what she called "a racket," but the soft brown eyes which looked at her so pleadingly were too full of love, gentleness, and mischief to be resisted, and permission for "one more ride" was given, "provided she'd promise not to break her neck."

Oh, what fun we had that afternoon! What a big rent she tore in my gingham frock, and what a "dear, delightful old haunted castle of a thing" she pronounced our house to be. Darling, darling Nellie! I shut my eyes and she comes before me again, the same bright, beautiful creature she was when I saw her first, as she was when I saw her for the last, last time.

It rained until dark, and Nellie, who confidently expected to stay all night, had whispered to me her intention of "tying our toes together," when there came a tremendous rap upon the door, and without waiting to be bidden in walked Mr. Gilbert, puffing and swelling, and making himself perfectly at home, in a kind of off-hand manner, which had in it so much of condescension that I was disgusted, and when sure Nellie would not see me I made at him a wry face, thereby feeling greatly relieved!

After managing to let mother know how expensive his family was, how much he paid yearly for wines and cigars, and how much Adaline's education and piano had cost, he arose to go, saying to his daughter, "Come, puss, take off those—ahem—those habiliments, and let's be off!"

Nellie obeyed, and just before she was ready to start, she asked when I would come and spend the day with her.

I looked at mother, mother looked at Mr. Gilbert, Mr. Gilbert looked at me, and after surveying me from head to foot said, spitting between every other word, "Ye-es, ye-es, we've come to live in the country, and I suppose" (here he spit three suc-

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cessive times), "and I suppose we may as well be on friendly terms as any other; so, madam" (turning to mother), "I am willing to have your little daughter visit us occasionally." Then adding that "he would extend the same invitation to her, were it not that his wife was an invalid and saw no company," he departed.

One morning, several days afterward, a servant brought to our house a neat little note from Mrs. Gilbert, asking mother to let me spend the day with Nellie. After some consultation between mother and grandma, it was decided that I might go, and in less than an hour I was dressed and on the road, my hair braided so tightly in my neck that the little red bumps of flesh set up here and there, like currants on a brown earthen platter.

Nellie did not wait to receive me formally, but came running down the road, telling me that Robin had made a swing in the barn, and that we would play there most all day, as her mother was sick, and Adaline, who occupied two-thirds of the house, wouldn't let us come near her. This Adaline was to me a very formidable personage. Hitherto I had only caught glimpses of her, as with long skirts and waving plumes she sometimes flashed past our house on horseback, and it was with great trepidation that I now followed Nellie into the parlor, where she told me her sister was.

"Adaline, this is my little friend," said she; and Adaline replied:

"How do you do, little friend?"

My cheeks tingled, and for the first time raising my eyes I found myself face to face with the haughty belle. She was very tall and queenlike in her figure, and though she could hardly be called handsome, there was about her an air of elegance and refinement which partially compensated for the absence of beauty. That she was proud one could see from the glance of her large black eyes and the curl of her lip. Coolly surveying me for a moment, as she would any other curious specimen, she resumed her book, never speaking to me again, except to ask, when she saw me gazing wonderingly around the splendidly-furnished room, "if I supposed I could remember every article of furniture, and give a faithful report."

I thought I was insulted when she called me "little friend," and now, feeling sure of it, I tartly replied that "if I couldn't she perhaps might lend me paper and pencil, with which to write them down."

"Original, truly," said she, again poring over her book.

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Nellie, who had left me for a moment, now returned, bidding me come and see her mother, and passing through the long hall, I was soon in Mrs. Gilbert's room, which was as tastefully, though perhaps not quite so richly, furnished as the parlor. Mrs. Gilbert was lying upon a sofa, and the moment I looked upon her, the love which I had so freely given the daughter was shared with the mother, in whose pale sweet face, and soft brown eyes, I saw a strong resemblance to Nellie. She was attired in a rose-colored morning-gown, which flowed open in front, disclosing to view a larger quantity of rich French embroidery than I had ever before seen.

Many times during the day, and many times since, have I wondered what made her marry, and if she really loved the bearish-looking man who occasionally stalked into the room, smoking cigars and talking very loudly, when he knew how her head was throbbing with pain.

I had eaten but little breakfast that morning, and verily I thought I should famish before their dinner hour arrived; and when at last it came, and I saw the table glittering with silver, I felt many misgivings as to my ability to acquit myself creditably. But by dint of watching Nellie, doing just what she did, and refusing just what she refused, I managed to get through with it tolerably well. For once, too, in my life I drank all the wine I wanted; the result of which was that long before sunset I went home, crying and vomiting with the sick headache, which Sally said "served me right;" at the same time hinting her belief that I was slightly intoxicated!

CHAPTER III.

THE HAUNTED HOUSE.

Down our long, green lane, and at the further extremity of the narrow footpath which led to the "old mine," was another path or wagon road which wound along among the fern bushes, under the chestnut trees, across the hemlock swamp, and up to a grassy ridge which overlooked a small pond, said, of course, to have no bottom. Fully crediting this story, and knowing, moreover, that China was opposite to us, I had often taken down my atlas and hunted through that ancient empire, in hopes of finding a corresponding sheet of water. Failing to do

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so I had made one with my pencil, writing against it, "Cranberry Pond," that being the name of its American brother.

Just above the pond on the grassy ridge stood an old dilapidated building which had long borne the name of the "haunted house." I never knew whether this title was given it on account of its proximity to the "old mine," or because it stood near the very spot where, years and years ago, the "bloody Indians" pushed those cart-loads of burning hemp against the doors "of the only remaining house in Quaboag"—for which see Goodrich's Child's History, page —, somewhere toward the commencement. I only know that 'twas called the "haunted house," and that for a long time no one would live there, on account of the rapping, dancing, and cutting-up generally which was said to prevail there, particularly in the west room, the one overhung with ivy and grapevines.

Three or four years before our story opens a widow lady, Mrs. Hudson, with her only daughter, Mabel, appeared in our neighborhood, hiring the "haunted house," and, in spite of the neighbors' predictions to the contrary, living there quietly and peaceably, unharmed by ghost or goblin. At first Mrs. Hudson was looked upon with distrust, and even a league with a certain old fellow was hinted at; but as she seemed to be well disposed, kind, and affable toward all, this feeling gradually wore away, and now she was universally liked, while Mabel, her daughter, was a general favorite. For two years past, Mabel had worked in the Fiskdale factory a portion of the time, going to school the remainder of the year. She was fitting herself for a teacher, and as the school in our district was small, the trustees had this summer kindly offered it to her. This arrangement delighted me; for, next to Nellie Gilbert, I loved Mabel Hudson best of anybody; and I fancied, too, that they looked alike, but of course it was all fancy.

Mrs. Hudson was a tailoress, and the day following my visit to Mr. Gilbert's I was sent by mother to take her some work. I found her in the little porch, her white cap-border falling over her placid face, and her wide checked apron coming nearly to the bottom of her dress. Mabel was there, too, and as she rose to receive me something about her reminded me of Adaline Gilbert. I could not tell what it was, for Mabel was very beautiful, and beside her Adaline would be plain; still there was a resemblance, either in voice or manner, and this it was, perhaps, which made me so soon mention the Gilberts and my visit to them the day previous.

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Instantly Mrs. Hudson and Mabel exchanged glances, and I thought the face of the former grew a shade paler; still I may have been mistaken, for in her usual tone of voice she began to ask me numberless questions concerning the family, which seemed singular, as she was not remarkable for curiosity. But it suited me. I loved to talk then not less than I do now, and in a few minutes I had told all I knew—and more, too, most likely.

At last Mrs. Hudson asked about Mr. Gilbert, and how I liked him.

"Not a bit," said I. "He's the hatefulest, crossest, big-feelingest man I ever saw, and Adaline is just like him!"

Had I been a little older I might, perhaps, have wondered at the crimson flush which my hasty words brought to Mrs. Hudson's cheek, but I did not notice it then, and thinking she was, of course, highly entertained, I continued to talk about Mr. Gilbert and Adaline, in the last of whom Mabel seemed the most interested. Of Nellie I spoke with the utmost affection, and when Mrs. Hudson expressed a wish to see her, I promised, if possible, to bring her there; then, as I had already outstaid the time for which permission had been given, I tied on my sunbonnet and started for home, revolving the ways and means by which I should keep my promise.

This proved to be a very easy matter; for within a few days Nellie came to return my visit, and as mother had other company she the more readily gave us permission to go where we pleased. Nellie had a perfect passion for ghost and witch stories, saying though that "she never liked to have them explained—she'd rather they'd be left in solemn mystery;" so when I told her of the "old mine" and the "haunted house" she immediately expressed a desire to see them. Hiding our bonnets under our aprons the better to conceal our intentions from sister Lizzie, who, we fancied, had serious thoughts of *tagging*, we sent her upstairs in quest of something which we knew was not there, and then away we scampered down the green lane and across the pasture, dropping once into some alders as Lizzie's yellow hair became visible on the fence at the foot of the lane. Our consciences smote us a little, but we kept still until she returned to the house; then, continuing our way, we soon came in sight of the mine, which Nellie determined to explore.

It was in vain that I tried to dissuade her from the attempt. She was resolved, and stationing myself at a safe distance I waited while she scrambled over stones, sticks, logs, and

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bushes, until she finally disappeared in the cave. Ere long, however, she returned with soiled pantelets, torn apron, and scratched face, saying that "the mine was nothing in the world but a hole in the ground, and a mighty little one at that." After this I didn't know but I would sometime venture in, but for fear of what might happen I concluded to choose a time when I hadn't run away from Liz!

When I presented Nellie to Mrs. Hudson she took both her hands in hers, and, greatly to my surprise, kissed her on both cheeks. Then she walked hastily into the next room, but not until I saw something fall from her eyes, which I am sure were tears.

"Funny, isn't it?" said Nellie, looking wonderingly at me. "I don't know whether to laugh or what."

Mabel now came in, and though she manifested no particular emotion, she was exceedingly kind to Nellie, asking her many questions, and sometimes smoothing her brown curls. When Mrs. Hudson again appeared she was very calm, but I noticed that her eyes constantly rested upon Nellie, who, with Mabel's grey kitten in her lap, was seated upon the doorstep, the very image of childish innocence and beauty. Mrs. Hudson urged us to stay to tea, but I declined, knowing that there was company at home, with three kinds of cake, besides cookies, for supper. So bidding her good-bye, and promising to come again, we started homeward, where we found the ladies discussing their green tea and making large inroads upon the three kinds of cake.

One of them, a Mrs. Thompson, was gifted with the art of fortune-telling, by means of tea-grounds, and when Nellie and I took our seats at the table she kindly offered to see what was in store for us. She had frequently told my fortune, each time managing to fish up a freckle-faced boy so nearly resembling her grandson, my particular aversion, that I didn't care to hear it again. But with Nellie 'twas all new, and after a great whirling of tea-grounds and staining of mother's best table-cloth, she passed her cup to Mrs. Thompson, confidently whispering to me that she guessed she'd tell her something about Willie Raymond, who lived in the city, and who gave her the little cornelian ring which she wore. With the utmost gravity Mrs. Thompson read off the past and present, and then peering far into the future she suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, my! there's a gulf, or something, before you, and you are going to tumble into it headlong; don't ask me anything more."

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I never did and never shall believe in fortune-telling, much less in Granny Thompson's "turned-up cups," but years after I thought of her prediction with regard to Nellie. Poor, poor Nellie!

CHAPTER IV.

JEALOUSY.

On the first Monday in June our school commenced, and long before breakfast Lizzie and I were dressed and had turned inside out the little cupboard over the fireplace where our books were kept during vacation. Breakfast being over we deposited in our dinner-basket the whole of a custard pie, and were about starting off when mother said, "we shouldn't go a step until half-past eight," adding further, that "we must put that pie back, for 'twas one she'd saved for their own dinner."

Lizzie pouted, while I cried, and taking my bonnet I repaired to the "great rock," where the sassafras, blackberries, and blacksnakes grew. Here I sat for a long time, thinking if I ever did grow up and get married (I was sure of the latter), I'd have all the custard pie I could eat for once! In the midst of my reverie a footstep sounded near, and looking up I saw before me Nellie Gilbert, with her satchel of books on her arm, and her sunbonnet hanging down her back, after the fashion in which I usually wore mine. In reply to my look of inquiry she said her father had concluded to let her go to the district school, though he didn't expect her to learn anything but "slang terms and ill manners."

By this time it was half-past eight, and together with Lizzie we repaired to the schoolhouse, where we found assembled a dozen girls and as many boys, among whom was Tom Jenkins. Tom was a great admirer of beauty, and hence I could never account for the preference he had hitherto shown for me, who my brothers called "bung-eyed" and Sally "raw-boned." He, however, didn't think so. My eyes, he said, were none too large, and many a night had he carried home my books for me, and many a morning had he brought me nuts and raisins, to say nothing of the time when I found in my desk a little note, which said— But everybody who's been to school, knows what it said!

Taking it all round we were as good as engaged; so you can

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judge what my feelings were when, before the night of Nellie's first day at school, I saw Tom Jenkins giving her an orange which I had every reason to think was originally intended for me! I knew very well that Nellie's brown curls and eyes had done the mischief; and though I did not love her the less, I blamed him the more for his fickleness, for only a week before he had praised my eyes, calling them a "beautiful indigo blue," and all that. I was highly incensed, and when on our way from school he tried to speak good-humoredly, I said, "I'd thank you to let me alone! I don't like you, and never did!"

He looked sorry for a minute, but soon forgot it all in talking to Nellie, who after he had left us said "he was a cleverish kind of boy, though he couldn't begin with William Raymond." After that I was very cool toward Tom, who attached himself more and more to Nellie, saying "she had the handsomest eyes he ever saw"; and, indeed, I think it chiefly owing to those soft, brown, dreamy eyes that I am not now "Mrs. Tom Jenkins of Jenkinsville," a place way out West, whither Tom and his mother have migrated.

One day Nellie was later at school than usual, giving as a reason that their folks had company—a Mr. Sherwood and his mother, from Hartford; and adding that if I'd never tell anybody as long as I lived and breathed she'd tell me something.

Of course I promised, and Nellie told me how she guessed that Mr. Sherwood, who was rich and handsome, liked Adaline. "Anyway, Adaline likes him," said she, "and oh, she's so nice and good when he's around. I ain't 'Nell, you hateful thing' then, but I'm 'Sister Nellie.' They are going to ride this morning, and perhaps they'll go by here. There they are, now!" and looking toward the road I saw Mr. Sherwood and Adaline Gilbert on horseback, riding leisurely past the schoolhouse. She was nodding to Nellie, but he was looking intently at Mabel, who was sitting near the window. I know he asked Adaline something about her, for I distinctly heard a part of her reply—"a poor factory girl," and Adaline's head tossed scornfully, as if that were a sufficient reason why Mabel should be despised.

Mr. Sherwood evidently did not think so, for the next day he walked by alone—and the next day he did the same, this time bringing with him a book, and seating himself in the shadow of a chestnut tree not far from the schoolhouse. The moment school was out, he arose and came forward, inquiring for Nellie, who, of course, introduced him to Mabel. The

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three then walked on together, while Tom Jenkins stayed in the rear with me, wondering what I wanted to act so for; "couldn't a feller like more than one girl if he wanted to?"

"Yes, I s'posed a feller could, though I didn't know, nor care!"

Tom made no reply, but whittled away upon a bit of shingle, which finally assumed the shape of a heart, and which I afterward found in his desk with the letter "N" written upon it, and then scratched out. When at last we reached our house Mr. Sherwood asked Nellie "where that old mine and sawmill were, of which she had told him so much."

"Right on Miss Hudson's way home," said Nellie. "Let's walk along with her;" and the next moment Mr. Sherwood, Mabel, and Nellie were in the long, green lane which led down to the sawmill.

Oh, how Adaline stormed when she heard of it, and how sneeringly she spoke to Mr. Sherwood of the "factory girl," insinuating that the bloom on her cheek was paint, and the lily on her brow powder! But he probably did not believe it, for almost every day he passed the schoolhouse, generally managing to speak with Mabel; and once he went all the way home with her, staying ever so long, too, for I watched until 'twas pitch dark, and he hadn't got back yet!

In a day or two he went home, and I thought no more about him, until Tom, who had been to the post office, brought Mabel a letter, which made her turn red and white alternately, until at last she cried. She was very absent-minded the remainder of that day, letting us do as we pleased, and never in my life did I have a better time "carrying on" than I did that afternoon when Mabel received her first letter from Mr. Sherwood.

CHAPTER V.

NEW RELATIONS.

ABOUT six weeks after the close of Mabel's school we were one day startled with the intelligence that she was going to be married, and to Mr. Sherwood, too. He had become tired of the fashionable ladies of his acquaintance, and when he saw how pure and artless Mabel was, he immediately became in-

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terested in her; and at last, overcoming all feelings of pride, he had offered her his hand, and had been accepted. At first we could hardly credit the story; but when Mrs. Hudson herself confirmed it we gave it up, and again I wondered if I should be invited. All the nicest and best chestnuts which I could find, to say nothing of the apples and butternuts, I carried to her, not without my reward either, for when invitations came to us I was included with the rest. Our family were the only invited guests, and I felt no fears this time of being hidden by the crowd.

Just before the ceremony commenced there was the sound of a heavy footstep upon the outer porch, a loud knock at the door, and then into the room came Mr. Gilbert! He seemed slightly agitated, but not one-half so much as Mrs. Hudson, who exclaimed, "William, my son, why are you here?"

"I came to witness my sister's bridal," was the answer; and turning toward the clergyman, he said, somewhat authoritatively, "Do not delay for me, sir. Go on."

There was a movement in the next room, and then the bridal party entered, both starting with surprise as they saw Mr. Gilbert. Very beautiful did Mabel look as she stood up to take upon herself the marriage vow, not a syllable of which did one of us hear. We were thinking of Mr. Gilbert, and the strange words, "my son" and "my sister."

When it was over, and Mabel was Mrs. Sherwood, Mr. Gilbert approached Mrs. Hudson, saying, "Come, mother, let me lead you to the bride."

With an impatient gesture she waved him off, and going alone to her daughter, threw her arms around her neck, sobbing convulsively. There was an awkward silence, and then Mr. Gilbert, thinking he was called upon for an explanation, arose, and addressing himself mostly to Mr. Sherwood, said, "I suppose what has transpired here to-night seems rather strange, and will undoubtedly furnish the neighborhood with gossip for more than a week, but they are welcome to canvass whatever I do. I can't help it if I was born with an unusual degree of pride, neither can I help feeling mortified, as I many times did, at my family, particularly after she," glancing at his mother, "married the man whose name she bears."

Here Mrs. Hudson lifted up her head, and coming to Mr. Gilbert's side, stood proudly erect, while he continued: "She would tell you he was a good man, but I hated him, and swore never to enter the house while he lived. I went away, took

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care of myself, grew rich, married into one of the first families in Hartford, and—and "—

Here he paused, and his mother, continuing the sentence, added, "and grew ashamed of your own mother, who many a time went without the comforts of life that you might be educated. You were always a proud, wayward boy, William, but never did I think you would do as you have done. You have treated me with utter neglect, never allowing your wife to see me, and when I once proposed visiting you in Hartford you asked your brother, now dead, to dissuade me from it, if possible, for you could not introduce me to your acquaintances as your mother. Never do you speak of me to your children, who, if they know they have a grandmother, little dream that she lives within a mile of their father's dwelling. One of them I have seen, and my heart yearned toward her as it did toward you when first I took you in my arms, my firstborn baby; and yet, William, I thank Heaven there is in her sweet face no trace of her father's features. This may sound harsh, unmotherly, but greatly have I been sinned against, and now, just as a brighter day is dawning upon me, why have you come here? Say, William, why?"

By the time Mrs. Hudson had finished, nearly all in the room were weeping. Mr. Gilbert, however, seemed perfectly indifferent, and with the most provoking coolness, replied, "I came to see my fair sister married—to congratulate her upon an alliance which will bring us upon a more equal footing."

"You greatly mistake me, sir," said Mr. Sherwood, turning haughtily toward Mr. Gilbert, at the same time drawing Mabel nearer to him; "you greatly mistake me, if, after what I have heard, you think I would wish for your acquaintance. If my wife, when poor and obscure, was not worthy of your attention, *you* certainly are not now worthy of hers, and it is my request that our intercourse should end here."

Mr. Gilbert muttered something about "extenuating circumstances," and "the whole not being told," but no one paid him any attention; and at last, snatching up his hat, he precipitately left the house, I sending after him a hearty good riddance, and mentally hoping he would measure his length in the ditch which he must pass on his way across Hemlock Swamp.

The next morning Mr. and Mrs. Sherwood departed on their bridal tour, intending on their return to take their mother with them to the city. Several times during their absence I saw

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Mr. Gilbert, either going to or returning from the "haunted house," and I readily guessed he was trying to talk his mother over, for nothing could be more mortifying than to be cut by the Sherwoods, who were among the first in Hartford. Afterward, greatly to my satisfaction, I heard that though, motherlike, Mrs. Hudson had forgiven her son, Mr. Sherwood ever treated him with a cool haughtiness which effectually kept him at a distance.

Once, indeed, at Mabel's earnest request, Mrs. Gilbert and Nellie were invited to visit her, and as the former was too feeble to accomplish the journey, Nellie went alone, staying a long time, and torturing her sister on her return with a glowing account of the elegantly-furnished house, of which Adaline had once hoped to be the proud mistress.

For several years after Mabel's departure from Rice Corner nothing especial occurred in the Gilbert family, except the marriage of Adaline with a rich bachelor, who must have been many years older than her father, for he colored his whiskers, wore false teeth and a wig, besides having, as Nellie declared, a wooden leg! For the truth of this last I will not vouch, as Nellie's assertion was only founded upon the fact of her having once looked through the keyhole of his door and espied, standing by his bed, something which looked like a cork leg, but which might have been a boot! What Adaline saw in him to like I could never guess. I suppose, however, that she only looked at his rich gilding, which covered a multitude of defects.

Immediately after the wedding the happy pair started for a two-years tour in Europe, where the youthful bride so enraged her baldheaded lord by flirting with a mustached Frenchman that in a fit of anger the old man picked up his goods, chattels, and wife, and returned to New York within three months of his leaving it!

CHAPTER VI.

POOR, POOR NELLIE.

And now, in the closing chapter of this brief sketch of the Gilberts, I come to the saddest part—the fate of poor Nellie, the dearest playmate my childhood knew, she whom the lapse of years ripened into a graceful, beautiful girl, loved by

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rybody, even by Tom Jenkins, whose boyish affection had own with his growth and strengthened with his strength.

And now Nellie was the affianced bride of William Raymond, who had replaced the little cornelian with the engagement ring. At last the rumor reached Tom Jenkins, awaking him from the sweetest dream he had ever known. He could not ask Nellie if it were true, so he came to me; and when I saw how he grew pale and trembled, I felt that Nellie was not altogether blameless. But he breathed no word of censure against her; and when, a year or two afterward, I saw her given to William Raymond, I knew that the love of two hearts was hers; the one to cherish and watch over her, the other to love and worship, silently, secretly, as a miser worships his hidden treasure.

The bridal was over. The farewells were over, and Nellie had gone—gone from the home whose sunlight she had made, and which she had left forever. Sadly the pale, sick mother wept, and mourned her absence, listening in vain for the light footfall and soft, ringing voice she would never hear again.

Three weeks had passed away, and then, far and near the papers teemed with accounts of the horrible Norwalk catastrophe, which desolated many a home, and wrung from many a heart its choicest treasure. Side by side they found them—Nellie and her husband—the light of her brown eyes quenched forever, and the pulses of his heart still in death!

I was present when they told the poor invalid of her loss, and even now I seem to hear the bitter, wailing cry which broke from her white lips, as she begged them to unsay what they had said, and tell her Nellie was not dead—that she would come back again.

It could not be. Nellie would never return; and in six weeks' time the broken-hearted mother was at rest with her child.

THE END.

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